■ Entertainment

Real reason why Sandara is leaving for Korea

■ News/A2

Fired American insurance mogul stays as GMA adviser

■ Across/A18

Development of Hundred Islands turned over to Alaminos City gov't

■ Lifestyle

Paradise is regained in Garden of Mary apparition site in Akita, Japan

JOB

Opportunity knocks but once

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Sunday

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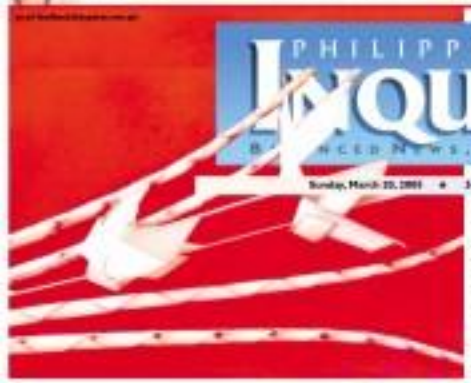
Boys' rite of passage best on Black Saturday

By Madonna T. Virola
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

BULACAN) Criminal Minds—Planning a circumcision? How about on Black Saturday?

Researchers, aged 9-12, prefer to have their ...



ART OF THE PALM

The Saturday before Palm Sunday, folks from Calauan, Laguna, come to Quiapo in Manila bearing their precious bundles of ornamental palm leaves. This they will bless, then set alight as symbols for Palm Sunday, which comes on the theme of the Holy Week. The Bible says that when Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, he was hailed by the people waving their palms and branches of leaves as they cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!"

Today, the palaspas will be brought to churches to be sold to congregants as the priest blesses. The blessed palaspas are brought home and hung outside the house. During calamity nights a piece of the dried leaves is lit in the hearth and is protected from lightning and thunder. Townsfolk keep a number of the palaspas until before next year's Holy Wednesday, this is burned, mixed with water, blessed and used to mark a cross on the faithful's foreheads.

Lay Catholics read Bible in original Greek, Hebrew

By Minerva Genandas
Head, PDI Research

'MY GOD, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

This verse, one of the Seven Last Words of Jesus Christ on the cross, will be read twice in today's Palm Sunday Mass.

Most Filipino Catholics would have their readings in English, Filipino or in their local dialects.

Tyson goes for Pacquiao

GenSan fighter vows to carry the whole nation in his fists

By Noah Trinidad

LAS VEGAS—Emmanuel Intangibility wonder Manny Pacquiao in this dazzling capital where he takes his gamble of gambles against Mexico's Erik Morales today with a bold, heroic vow to carry the whole nation in his arms.

And Pacquiao, who his boys called Little Tyson, yesterday received a confidence vote from the world heavyweight boxing great who inspired the Filipino boxing star's fierce, blazing style.

Mike Tyson, who is here to watch the fight, said he liked Morales to win but acknowledged the power of Pacquiao during a classic interview at the MGM Grand lobby where he was mobbed by fans who recognized him.

"Have you seen Pacquiao fight?" he was asked.

"Yes, he's powerful," said Tyson who started banging on the door in the VIP check-in.

Tyson first saw Pacquiao when the Filipino boxing celebrity from General Santos City was in action against Jorge Solis in the main supporting bout of Iran Barkley's losing fight with Lennox Lewis in Shreveport in June 2003.

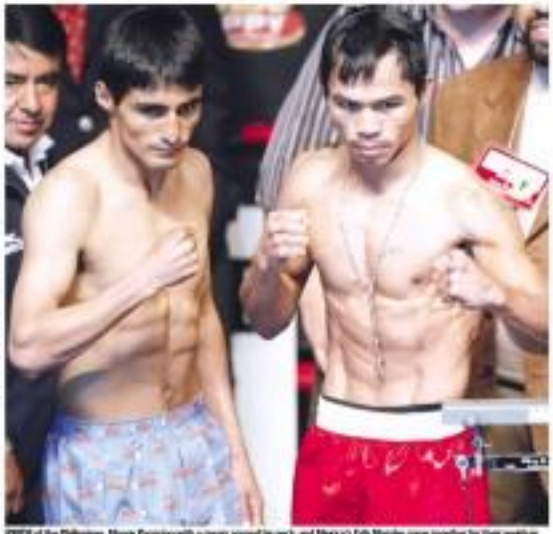
Tyson, after picking Pacquiao, said Morales could have a chance if he uses "constant jabs, combinations."

Tyson said the fight won't last the distance. (More stories in Sports, Page A21)

"Pacquiao might catch him, he throws too many punches. Morales don't throw too many punches it will be hard for Morales to keep the guy off, it will be hard to stop him."

His official ride is an make but the record is the best was at the MGM Grand Garden Arena around his split-second for in worth and impact.

Every punch he throws will be for his countrymen. "Boxin ay hanap kanin ng buong ang mga kababayan kong



PRIDE of the Philippines, Manny Pacquiao with a smile around his neck, and Mexico's Erik Morales pose together for their weigh-in on Friday at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas. The boxers are set to meet on Saturday (Sunday morning in Manila). Morales weighed in at 130 pounds; Pacquiao at 129.5. The Mexican has only two losses in 49 fights; Pacquiao only lost twice in 39 fights.

PNP security tight as FPJ funeral and Bush visit

By Luige B. del Puerto

THE SECURITY preparations in Metro Manila for Holy Week are comparable to those put in place during the visit of US President George W. Bush in October 2003 and the burial of movie king Fernando Poe Jr. last December.

This was what Director Avelino Razon, chief of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO), said yesterday when asked whether the current security measures put up in response to the supposed bomb plot of the Abu Sayyaf had any tourist possibility.

"But if you will recall, every year we really prepare for the Holy Week and the summer vacation. However, the bomb threat of the Abu Sayyaf (has been added)," he said.

Razon said some 13,000 of the NCRPO's 15,000 men would be deployed at any given time in the metropolis, to be augmented by 3,000 soldiers from the Armed Forces' NCR Command and more than 100 men from the Special Action Force (SAF) of the Philippine National Police.

He said the SAF would be deployed to "sensitive areas" as needed, and that soldiers were now helping man checkpoints on the south, east and north entry points to Metro Manila.

Razon identified the "sensitive areas"

Silliman U grad wins int'l tilt for making fish sleep without water

By Nina Pil
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—He started out of his league but what mattered was that he could make fish sleep without water for more than 12 hours.

Bo Jun Jun, Bacolod, Consumers, a graduate student of Silliman University, was one of the three-man power in the Ben International Business Plan competition dominated by business students from big name schools, such as Oxford, Wharton and Stanford.

The two other major and bigger prizes, including the grand prize of $25,000, went to entries from the University of California Berkley and Northwestern University.

Consumers is the first Filipino to win one of the top prizes in the prestigious contest.

His third place finish in the 7th University of San Francisco Business Plan competition held in California (March 9-12, was worth $2,500 in cash. (See related story on Page B1.)

"Surprise" was how some of Consumers' beaming businessmen and investments Tanu described the seamless fish transport technology, Consumers told the business.

The 41-year-old Filipino did not only win business for his country. With his technology, he may also have boosted the competitiveness of Philippine fish traders in the world market.

"I felt very nervous," Consumers,

THERE'S always room for one more for this Batak mother.

VANISHING TRIBE

Palawan Batak urged to have 'lots of babies'

By Jerry E. Esplanada

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—They are probably the only communities in the country today where "making lots of babies" is officially encouraged, and rewarded as well.

Mayor Edward Hagedorn was referring to the tribal settlements in Oas, 60 kilometers from the Batak, Palawan's vanishing tribe.

All highly marginalized communities, the villages sit on the slopes of Cleopatra's Needle, a 1,593-meter mountain more than 80 km northwest of the Palawan capital.

They are located in nine Municipalities in barangays Langogan, Tagnaya in Concepcion; Bantulanon in Manoyo; Cayasan in Napsibit, and Kalakasan

SPECIAL REPORT

"make more Batak babies" program, in coordination with the city health office.

Cash gifts, food supplies, vegetable and fruit seeds and other incentives await participating couples.

"We'll also provide financing for small livelihood projects," said Hagedorn, who promised special rewards for program "topnotchers," whatever that means.

Hagedorn's move is in conflict between the program and the Department of

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SUNDAY, MARCH 20, 2005

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

GMA stands by fired US adviser

By Cl C. Cabuenagan Jr.

DOUBTFUL Arroyo's International Advisory Group

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye yesterday said Greenberg was a "valuable member of President Arroyo's International Advisory Board."

"We trust that he will continue to serve on the International Advisory Board in his new capacity as non-executive chairman of AIG," he said.

AIG, the parent firm of Philippine American Insurance Co., announced on Monday that Greenberg would be stepping down as chief executive as part of a "transparent succession plan" but that Greenberg would continue to serve as AIG's non-executive chair.

AIG came under suspicion when it was reported that the US Securities and Exchange Commission and the New York Attorney General's Office were looking into some of its transactions that may have artificially burnished the company's financial picture.

The US-based "Wall Street Journal" newspaper reported in November that Greenberg was the target of a federal investigation for allegedly manipulating AIG's stock prices in 2001. AIG paid $126 million to end the investigations.

Greenberg is said to be President Arroyo's "eyes and ears" in corporate America and in Washington politics.

"His advice and insights have been very helpful in assisting us in monitoring the perceptions of the international business community regarding the Philippines as an investment location. Through the many years he and his firm have been doing business in the Philippines and their numerous investments, they have demonstrated their confidence in the growth of our economy," Bunye said.

Greenberg heads the 16th that was formed a few years ago to help the President formulate policies to boost Philippine competitiveness in the global market. The group is supposed to assist the administration in coming up with best practices to strengthen the country's economic programs and its relations with the international financial community.

Arroyo created the 20E advised the Arroyo government to step up its anti-corruption drive and press the Congress to pass reform legislation designed to increase business confidence and foreign investments in the Philippines.

Failure to pass VAT will hurt poor—Palace

SLEEKING to prevent Congress to pass the value-added tax (vat) by April 1, Malacañang warned lawmakers yesterday that failure to approve the measure would hamper the delivery of programs to the poor.

"What is at stake here is the fate of the government's pro-poor agenda and the thousands of jobs that can be reaped through increased confidence and investments," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement.

"We are banking on the special session to provide the impetus to finally get the VAT bill passed."

The Senate had declared a Lenten break from March 19 to April 10 without passing its version of the VAT reforms, but President Macapagal-Arroyo, in a bid to prod the lawmakers into passing the measure, ordered a special session from March 31 to April 1.

Bunye, speaking on DMN radio, expressed confidence the lawmakers would give priority to the interests of the country by "exerting all efforts to extend the special session."

Mr. Arroyo last called a special session in early January this year, but only a handful of legislators cut short their Christmas vacation and lauded Malacañang's appeal to approve new tax measures.

Congress failed to meet Malacañang's target of March 15 for the passage of the VAT reforms measure.

Bunye said Ms. Arroyo did not forget after the senators threw failure to approve the proposed increase in the VAT rate from 10 percent to 12 percent and the lifting of VAT exemptions on petroleum and power sales and services of professionals.

"It only shows that we are respecting the legislative process so the President has nothing to feel bad about when happened," Bunye said.

Malacañang is taking comfort in that the senators did last report that VAT reforms are right, Bunye said. —GMC. Cabuenagan Jr.

Solon defends Las Vegas trip

THERE'S nothing wrong with going to Las Vegas and cheering for a modern-day Filipino hero.

Defending his congressional colleagues' trip to the so-called Entertainment Capital of the World, Davao Oriental Rep. Joel Mayo Almario said yesterday they were making the trip to "lend moral support" to Manny Pacquiao in his epic match with Mexican Jr.M Morales.

Almario, chair of the house committee on games and amusements, denied reports that he was in the group of more than a dozen congressmen who had gone to Las Vegas.

One of the group, Agusan del Sur Rep. Rodolfo Plaza, even said that Congress had paid for his plane ticket and given him a $1,500 allowance.

Almario said that House members had completed action on the administration's urgent bills and were still waiting for the Senate to come up with its own version of the proposed laws.

"There is nothing wrong with congressmen going to support Pacquiao, our modern hero," he said.

The Lower House on Thursday adjourned its session for the Lenten break.

"House members have not been remiss in their duty to their constituents as well as to the country as shown by the completion of urgent measures," Almario said.

Rep. Arc Rodriguez, chair of the security committee, said he did not sign any travel authority concerning his colleagues' trip to Las Vegas.

He said the House did not sanction the trip and that if members of Congress wanted to see the boxing match, they should spend their own money.

Rodriguez added that the congressmen who left for Las Vegas could not avail of any travel allowance since travel authorities must first be signed and submitted to the committee on inter-par liamentary relations and diplomacy, prior to the trip. —Philip C. Cabacungan

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METRO
Editor Ester G. Dipasupil Assistant Editor Conor B. Dita Jr.

Bomb threats fail to stop mad summer rush for the provinces

By Nancy C. Carvajal

"[THERE] or no threats, omens fills rush to bus stations in droves on their way to the provinces.

"If we succumb to threats then they have succeeded in terrorizing us," said Jose Buan, a student and one of hundreds who flocked to the Araneta Center bus terminal yesterday.

The Araneta Center terminal is host to 22 bus companies offering trips to Luzon, the Visayas, and even Mindanao.

Buan was among the 4,000 or so who would take him to his hometown in Aklan.

He said he had always taken a bus to his province.

Nearby, a family of six waited for their bus to arrive.

"This is the cheapest form of transportation, especially for a big family like ours," said Nenita, who added that amid terrorist threats all the commuters could probably do was pray that nothing bad would happen.

"What we can do is pray for safety," added the woman who said it would be her first time to return to her hometown in 10 years.

According to her, she and her family were more scared of the heat-related traffic, which she said had delayed the arrival of their bus.

Newly installed National Police chief Director General Arturo Lomibao said the other day that the threat of bombings was real.

Subsequently, police have tightened security in the metropolis, especially in crowded places.

"We believed that the police are doing their job in preventing any terrorist attack," said booking another passenger, when asked about security measures in ensure the safety of those going out of the Metro Manila.

Bus terminal manager Samson Lagaspi said the influx of passengers had not dampened from recent events and it is the same as always.

"In past summer like this, we dispatched more than 800 buses per Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao," Lagaspi said.

Off-season, he explained, only about 400 buses arrive at and leave the terminal daily.

"We have sufficient security measures and we are coordinating with the police," Lagaspi added.

The terminal management, Lagaspi said, issued bomb-sniffing dogs to help its security guards and law enforcers in the inspection of luggage, which are all opened and searched.

"We are now prepared packing cages to put loads or on the passengers' belongings," he said.

Cubao police station director Supt. Renante Solla, who is spotted the security measures at the terminal, said that tightened security measures have been imposed not only in bus terminals but also in malls, the Metro Rail Transit and the Light Rail Transit terminals.

"Our men are deployed systematically so as not to neglect any areas," Solla said.

Over at Sto. Domingo church in Quezon Avenue, security measures were not increased but available personnel were told to be more alert.

"We have told our men to be diligent and many of suspicious persons," said Robert Abrantes, the church's in charge for security.

He said there have been no incidents to open the hope of people going to the church.

Navotas ship(-building) is sinking

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

"[THOUGH] he is not a fisherman, the livelihood of Rodrigo dela Cruz, 56, depends on the sea.

In the coastal town of Navotas, where more than half of the population is into fishing, dela Cruz earns money whether going to sea.

A Samoa builder, he is happy that fishing remains the biggest industry in their town. The Navotas Fishport, according to local officials, is the biggest fish market in Southeast Asia.

Fishing gave birth to the boat-building industry in Navotas.

"If you do not have your own boats for fishing, you will have to rent. That will be very costly," Barangay Sipac-Almacen chair Armida Lloreg said. Motorized bancas are also needed to reach fish ports.

Dela Cruz did not have any formal training and nobody in his family was into boat building. He learned his craft by observing others.

He was a laborer in one of several shipyards in the coastal town before accepting a foreign job as carpenter. When he returned in 1986, he went back to his last love.

Dela Cruz said the cheapest motor banca was called, which sells for P25,000 and takes three weeks to build.

The most expensive he has assembled is called Bulubad. He said one has cost him P1.5 million.

Curves, no corners

"It is more difficult to build a banca than a house. Houses have corners. Bancas have curves," Dela Cruz said in Filipino.

He builds the bancas first then draws the design. "I use [visualize] the [image]... then I would ask someone to draw it so it could be duplicated," he said.

He does almost everything—carpentry, connecting the wires, installing the engine, painting. The only thing he can not do is lathering.

He said he had always taken a boat to his province.

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RODRIGO dela Cruz (left photo) stands in front of one of the many boats he had built while trying to keep alive an industry that has been in a crisis for more than one. Above, workers repair a boat at the Navotas Shipyard, which can relish say is the oldest operating boat yard in the country. —

Cruz had to cope with sharp increases in production costs. In 2002, a sheet of plywood cost P600. Today, has risen three years later, the price to P1,200.

In fact, dela Cruz could not even afford to have his own banca.

Both dela Cruz and Villaflor have another concern—the overfishing would kill their boat-building.

"The fishing industry is very shaky. Resources have been depleted. Prices of oil are taxed very steep," said Villaflor who, in 2000, stopped their fishing operations.

Lambert Gianghic, president of the association of shipyards in Metro Manila, said shipyards in Navotas used to assemble ships for companies in Japan, Korea, Malaysia and even the United States.

"But... the government's changing policies on importation of made these made business (more) difficult for local companies," he said.

Another problem is corruption.

"The government is very corrupt. How can we survive against foreign competitors?" Gianghic added.

Steven has 12 registered shipyards. But Gianghic said there were 39 shipyards in the small town, including unregistered ones.

Gianghic said, "We're getting tired of expansion and re-development because many shipyards have been mushrooming. Driving behind small fishing boats also block our navigational area."

The municipal government appears to be powerless as the national government, specifically the Maritime Industry Authority in Manila, is in charge of this industry.

"We do not have ordinances to regulate shipyards. We do not have the technical capability to evaluate [their operations]," Tiongson said.

Villaflor said Filipinos have the skills and the government has the equipment and technical knowhow. "Why don't we build our own ships?"

Tiongson, the government finds an answer, a once booming industry was sick.

Cop-rob suspect arrested

POLICE Officer 1 Edwin Bonza was also on a predatory of sorts.

Bonza, 30, and a member of the Regional Security Action Unit in Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig City, was arrested the other day while attending a relative's graduation rites in Dalandan Pueblito Street, Bonza de, Manila.

The policeman, a resident of Ilaya Street, Tondo, Manila, is being accused of participating in a series of robberies in Manila.

He has been identified by four complainants as one of several suspects who held them up in separate incidents, according to Senior Insp. Marco Peraya.

Peraya, who heads the Special Operation Police District's special weapons and tactics team, said Bonza managed to continue working as a policeman despite his alleged illegal activities.

However, members of the SWAT managed to track him down at the graduation rites, where he was promptly arrested.

Marjorie C. Ortiz

OUTREACH
Indigent families of Barangay Parasan, Mantimupa City, undergo one of the medicine, dental and medical checkups at the "Kasan Ala Ang sa Barangay" medical mission of United Laboratories.

Officials zero in on gastro culprit

SAMPLES of 12 kinds of food served at the graduation ball of Cecilio Pudadera of the De La Salle-Zobel Santiago School in Ayala Alabang, Muntinlupa City, have been sent to the Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD) for analysis.

BFAD is trying to determine which of those on the menu caused gastroenteritis to 21 students who attended the ball last Wednesday.

Previously it was reported that the mango and strawberry crepe served as dessert could have caused the food poisoning.

Food served were shrimp tempura, chicken yakisoba, salt noodle, French fries, pizza, pasta, nachos, chicken and beef quesadilla, microburger with condiments, ice cream, crepes with mango, strawberry, apple and lettuce, and iced tea. — Analiza M. Te

Now, Makati is asking for help from MMDA

By Jocelyn R. Uy

TRAFFIC! Blame the bridge.

The Makati Department Public Safety (DPS) is appealing to the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to help ease the traffic congestion along C-5 Road, especially on the approach to Gabriela Avenue.

In a recent meeting with MMDA Traffic Engineering Center and DPWH officials at the Makati City Hall, Makati DPS officials pointed out the traffic buildup on the southbound lane of C-5.

He blamed it on the narrowness of Lunera Bridge, which spans the Pasig River connecting Barangay Pinagka in Pasig City with Barangay West Rembo in Makati.

"Our observation is that traffic eases up after Lunera," said Chief Superintendent Rufo Miguel, Makati DPS director.

He added that Makati-bound motorists were the ones inconvenienced by traffic, which sometimes stretches as far as the C-5-Ortigas flyover.

Makati traffic officials noted the abrupt lane transition, which starts with four lanes at C-5 and suddenly narrows down to three lanes. Only two lanes at the bridge.

Sun Miguel added that the lack of a dedicated lane along C-5 going to The Fort in Taguig City was also affecting traffic flow, forcing vehicles heading for The Fort to enter the mid-two lanes of C-5.

"The line to be addressed by MMDA and DPWH is the concern, so as not to further inconvenience motorists," he said.

The area has suffered a resurgence in traffic after Makati opened a lane that commences the C-5-Edsa-an intersection from San Guillermo Avenue in Pasig to Edsa-Guadalupe.

The MMDA earlier closed the Pasig-to-Makati lane to allow more time for vehicles along C-5 to cross the intersection.

The Makati portion of C-5, which is the third most crowded road in Metro, has a daily traffic load of 94,482 vehicles.

The two other busiest roads in Makati are Edsa and Ortigas Highway.

PNP exec says Abus after him

By Leila B. delos Reyes

MEN ARE beyond members or their sympathizers are the work of the spokesperson of the Philippine National Police?

Senior Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil, PNP spokesperson, said two "Tausug-sounding" men clad in dark jackets were looking for his house in Taguig the other night.

"Where does Bataoil live?" the PNP spokesperson said the two men asked a neighbor at around 8 p.m. Friday.

The neighbor said she was new to the area and did not know where Bataoil lived, Bataoil said.

Bataoil said the neighbor reported the incident to the barangay who told him about it yesterday.

"As a result of what happened, I could say he/spot to be very observant," he said.

Asked how he came to the conclusion that the men were "Tausug-sounding," Bataoil said they spoke Filipino with an unmistakable accent.

Many members of the Abu Sayyaf belong to the Tausug tribe, a group in the southern Philippines that is predominantly Muslim.

"Abu Sayyaf men want to try to get even with the success of my

BATACOR

counterinsurgency against them during the time of Camp Bagong Diwa," Bataoil said.

He said this was not the first time rumors of this sort had demeaned him.

In 2002 when he was spokesperson of PNP spokesperson, Bataoil said he received threats in the form of black ribbons and letters, telling him his days were numbered.

He said he thinks that most likely come from the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army.

"As Roger [CPP/NPA spokesperson] San Juan says very vocal against me," Bataoil said.

"My duty is my job and I would not be scared to face threats," he added.

Drive for press freedom

THE NATIONAL Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) yesterday launched a nationwide signature campaign against the resurgence of extrajudicial killings that it said would severely affect freedoms of the press and the public's right to know.

"Reporters are supposed to develop as many sources as possible, including those the government might consider terrorists. If any of the sources become fully operating are arrested, they would be obliged to become witnesses against them or sources, or else be in danger of being themselves charged with helping terrorists," the NUJP said in its petition on anti-terror legislation.

The NUJP said the proposed anti-terror bills now pending in both chambers of Congress include "draconian provisions."

A move proposed to engage in terrorism would be penalized by up to 12 years imprisonment, and police need only to arrest more liberal for the accused to overcome a life sentence, it said. Norman Bordadora

SUNDAY, MARCH 30, 2008

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Sunday SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy B. Philemotrez

Manny coy on fight plans

HIGHEST Pacquiao is raring to take on Erik Morales.

LAS VEGAS—Manny Pacquiao has scratched three of Erik Morales in secrets. But ask him if he has used anything else will help him when he fights Morales Saturday night (Sunday in Manila), and he says, "Yes, but I don't think I want to comment on that."

Ask Pacquiao why he was unable to stop Juan Manuel Marquez last May after dropping him three times in the first round, eventually managing only a draw and missing a chance to take Marquez's two featherweight belts, and Pacquiao is equally evasive.

"I don't want to think about the past," he said. "I believe I won that fight, but I just chalk it up to experience."

However, Pacquiao does not hesitate when asked if he is ready for Morales. The two will meet in the ring more today at the MGM Grand. Their junior lightweight fight is scheduled for 12 rounds. The card will be available on HBO pay-per-view beginning at 8 p.m.

"This is my longest preparation, three months," said Pacquiao, 26, of the Philippines. "We worked a lot for this fight. I am really prepared."

This is Pacquiao's first fight at 130 pounds. He has won world championships in the flyweight and super bantamweight divisions.

Although there are no official odds on the fight, promoters are billing it as a world title fight.

There are at least two questions that figure to be answered in this fight. One, Pacquiao, who is 39-3-2 with 30 knockouts, bring the power up to yet another weight class after starting his professional career 10 years ago as a 106-pound strawweight?

And, can Morales (47-7, 34 KOs) ramp up to the pace to what it'd take in a championship fight?

Alan Berk (New York Times News Service)

Las Vegas bettors favor Pacquiao

FILIPINO boxing icon Manny Pacquiao officially becomes the first team to headline a pay-per-view card taken for fights this Morales in Las Vegas today.

The Filipino superstar has also been installed the money favorite over the Mexican living legend Morales, with Las Vegas oddsmakers even increasing his chances of winning based on the latest figures.

Also, in a survey by a Top Rank poll, 56 percent of those interviewed picked Pacquiao to win, while only 44 percent voted for Morales out of a total of 10,000 respondents.

At the latest Vegas betting line, the Filipino favorite was installed a -135 favorite over Morales with the Mexican remaining the underdog at +120.

It is the biggest swing for Pacquiao since the fight was officially inked, and the first time for Morales to be rated such a huge underdog.

Pacquiao tipped the scales yesterday at 129.5 lbs, while Morales came in at exactly 130 lbs during the official weigh-in held at Hall 'Mark of the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas.

Adrian Lagumbay, contributor

Mom to pray rather than watch fight

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Dionisia Pacquiao, Manny's mother, said she has not stopped praying for her son's success although she was confident he would win.

Ms Pacquiao said that since the time his son left for the United States for the fight, she has been praying that God would help Manny counted.

She told reporters on Friday that she was up to at a show Manny defending IBF Morales during their fight in Las Vegas Sunday morning.

But Ms Pacquiao said she would not be watching Manny's fight against Morales.

She said she would instead spend the hours praying because even if she was confident of her son's ability as a boxer, "I don't have the courage to watch Manny trade punches with his fellow boxer."

As in his previous fights, Manny's stay with Morales would be followed closely by members here. Agaton Z. Dennis, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Petron follows suit, hikes prices by 50¢

By Christine Saylican

IT'S never ending.

Less than a day after its rivals raised their prices, Petron Corp. followed suit midnight Friday and likewise increased its pump prices by 50 centavos per liter, citing higher prices of Dubai crude oil.

"This would reflect the continuing rise in crude costs. We will continue to offer cheap discounts to our valued customers," Petron said in a statement.

Early Friday Pilipinas Shell Inc., Caltex Philippines Inc. and new oil players increased the prices of their petroleum products by the same amount.

Third installment

The increase was the third installment in the series of price increases this month.

Diesel fuel is now priced at P25.80 per liter while unleaded gasoline now averages P29.40 to P30.20 per liter.

In the last two weeks, oil companies had increased fuel prices by 50 centavos per liter.

They had advised Malacañang of their plan to recover their additional costs of about P2 per liter this month.

Oil companies claimed that the 14 percent jump in the price of Dubai crude, the 22 percent increase in unleaded gasoline prices and the 28 percent rise in diesel from mid-January to mid-February should translate to an average increase of P2.50 per liter in pump prices in March.

Staggered basis

However, these unannounced hikes were implemented in a staggered basis or by installment to ease the impact on the consuming public.

"As much as we would want a full recovery, our market could not absorb as much," Pilipinas Shell vice president for corporate communications Roberto Ongpin said in an interview.

Public transport discount

Aside from limiting the price hike to 50 centavos per liter per week, Malacañang agreed to push for the 5% per liter discount to public transport groups in 247 gasoline station nationwide. Around 200 buses powered by compressed natural gas, promised reduced fares in gasoline, and adopt energy conservation measures.

Leading bets pull out of stock exchange race

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

IT MUST be the Holy Week mood.

In sharp contrast to the rancorous elections that had marred elections in the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) in the past, yesterday's PSE elections were relatively uneventful.

There was seven seats at stake but as it said before, I'm not running. This is for the development of the stock exchange," Pacheco quoted.

Simeon Mandal-Ocampo, Robert Coyiuto Jr., who served as PSE chair in 1998 and was the remainder among the elected brokers to the board yesterday, said he was also not running for PSE chair.

PSE sources said the post may be a toss-up between former banker and re-elected PSE director Bert Feria and re-elected broker director Wilfrido Sy, who has the support of Pacheco.

Feria is coming for a fourth term in the PSE board and reportedly has Wilkinson's blessing to head the PSE. Feria was not immediately available for comment. Feria is a prominent analyst on infrastructure finance and an economic adviser to the Speaker of the House of Representatives. He was former president of Philippine National Bank, Security Banking Corp. and Allied Banking Corp. He has served as an independent PSE director since 2002.

Ang, on the other hand, is president of local broker Asia Securities and chair of Securities Clearing Corp. of the Philippines (SCCP), the clearing house for stock market trades.

Also elected to the 15-man PSE board at the annual stockholder's meeting held yesterday at the Tektite Towers in Ortigas were Gonzalo Gosiengfiao of Campos Lanuza & Co., Fernando Pa of R.S. Lim & Co. and Francisco Villaroman of Securities Specialists Inc. There are seven brokers that sit on the PSE board.

The remaining eight are non-brokers, namely Asian Alliance Investment Corp. president and treasurer Renato Santiago of the Philippine Investor Relations Institute, Philippine Bank of Communications independent director Jose Luis Yulo; former Bankers Club Phils. chair Cornelio Penalva, Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) chair Bernardino Antonio, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. treasurer Anabelle Lim-Chua, San Miguel Corp. financial analyst Frederick de Vera, and PSE president Francis Lim.

Nene: Gov't could save P300B

SENATE minority Leader Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel Jr. yesterday urged President Arroyo to direct her Cabinet members to implement the local officials of the big budget departments, saying they would result in savings to the government of at least P300 billion.

Pimentel singled out the public works, interior and local government, health, agriculture and social welfare departments, saying that the P300 billion could be used to maintain local offices even though the local Government Code provides that national departments and agencies whose functions had been devolved to local government units should no longer maintain regional or district offices.

He said these departments' local offices, which are often heavily staffed and allocated big budgets, had become superfluous because their functions were already being carried out by the LGUs.

Pimentel cited the case of the Department of Public Works and Highways whose district engineering offices are somewhat less suitably equipped than many local governments.

He said the DPWH even borrows equipment from the local governments.

The opposition senator said there is no up a considerable amount of the national budget and these allotments could then be used to implement revenue source for the cash-strapped government.

Stating his calculations on the P907-billion national budget for 2005, the senator said the abolition of the regional offices of these five departments alone could result in savings of up to P300 billion. *Julie Lalong, Jaya Ilano*

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SUNDAY, MARCH 2

Iraq w

By Volt Contreras

FOREIGN workers in Iraq, including Filipinos, can look forward to a "safer" time in the violence-wracked country once the United States military leaves and an independent government takes over, according to an anti-war activist representing Iraq's biggest labor union.

"Believe me, within two to three months all the criminals will be back in prison" if the Iraqis are left alone to enforce the law, said Farouk Sadik Isma'al, foreign affairs secretary of the Southern Oil Co. Union, the labor union of Iraq's largest firm.

Isma'al was in Manila last week as a guest of the Iraq Solidarity Campaign (Philippines), which marked the second anniversary of the US "occupation" of Iraq on March 20.

"For 20 years, since the 1980s when Iraq was at war with Iran, we have plenty of foreign workers, especially from Philippines, and for this reason we like the Filipino people and would like to invite them to work with us," Isma'al said in an interview.

He said the continuing violence in his country was largely the work of criminals who were able to leave prison after Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was toppled.

Isma'al took part in a protest rally on T. M. Kalaw St. on Friday staged by militant groups demanding the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq. Antiriot police prevented the protesters from going to the US Embassy.

In a forum at the University of the Philippines on Thursday, the Iraqi labor leader said that "if you want to help us rebuild our country, help us end its occupation by the United States and its allies."

Lebanon 'forgives' Filipinos

THIRTY Filipinos—including 17 minors—were repatriated from Lebanon last week without having to undergo jail time or pay penalties under a Lebanese government program granting amnesty to undocumented aliens, the Department of Foreign Affairs said on Friday.

The program initially covered only Indian and Sri Lankan nationals as a "gesture of compassion" to countries affected by the tsunami tragedy late last year, said Nestor Padalhin, charge d'affaires at the Philippine Embassy in Lebanon.

The Filipinos were included as a result of talks conducted by the embassy with Lebanese immigration authorities since May 2004, Padalhin said.

Those who submitted to voluntary repatriation under the program were spared from having to pay penalties for overstaying—such as fees and imprisonment—while their exit papers were being processed, Padalhin said. ***Volt Contreras***

The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Gloco

Ukraine admits it sold missiles to Iran, China

KIEV—Ukraine has sold cruise-capable cruise missiles to both China and Iran, the prosecutor general's office said Friday, but stressed that the deals were illegal and under criminal investigation.

"This is not about exports of missiles but rather illegal sales which are being investigated by the SBU (security service) which has opened a criminal investigation of the director of the company Ukrvostokhan," the office said in a statement confirming a report by the London-based Financial Times (FT) that edition.

The investigation was announced late Friday by the United States, which, along with Japan, is reportedly worried about what appears to be a significant leak of military technology.

"I think it's fair to say that both the United States government and the Ukrainian government share a common concern and a dedication to acting to find out and prevent cases of proliferation," deputy US state department spokesperson Adam Ereli said.

"We've been working with the Ukrainian government on ramp-downs on proliferation. And the Ukrainian government, since these reports have come out, has said it's launching an internal investigation," he said.

"We certainly look forward to the results of that investigation," Ereli said. "And we'll work with them on steps and measures and joint actions we can take to prevent this kind of proliferation in the future."

Yesterday Pidgny, Ukraine's prosecutor general, told the Financial Times that 10 Soviet-era X-55 cruise missiles were exported in 2000—12 to Iran and six to China.

Pidgny was also quoted as saying that the missiles were not required with the nuclear warheads that they were designed to carry.

His office said a suspect in the case was currently standing a closed-door trial in Kiev.

Ukraine Foreign Minister Boris Tarasyuk said that the country's new leadership, which assumed power during late last year, was not responsible for the sales.

"We can only condemn the anti-democratic actions that were carried out by the previous authorities," he said while on a visit to neighboring Belarus.

"The results of [our] investigation point to a criminal group that were behind [a unlawful sales of arms," he said. Tarasyuk said the group included citizens of several countries.

The X-55, or as launched missile also known as the Kh-55 and AS-15 and first introduced in 1976, has a range of 3,000 km, which would place China—or North Korea, if it obtained the missile—easy access to Japan, while Iran could hit its main regional foe, Israel.

Last month the Ukrainian government opened a criminal inquiry, at the request of Japan, into the illegal sale of 10 missiles by the Ukrspecexport arms group to a paper that it was to Russia.

The Ukrainian confirmation of missile sales to Iran comes amid a tense diplomatic debate over Tehran's alleged quest for nuclear weaponry.

Reports about the missile sales going to Iran emerged earlier this month. AFP

UKRAINE'S President Viktor Yushchenko, left, and chief of Ukraine's Defense and Security Council Petro Poroshenko in Kiev, Ukraine, Nov. 24, 2000. Poroshenko gave the military orders to perform a "total inventory" of Ukrainian weapons March 18. AP

SELF PORTRAIT

A photograph titled "Self Portrait" by Adrien Tournachon, French, ca. 1855 which is part of a collection recently acquired by New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art that was collected by industrialist Howard Gilman. The collection includes American Civil War pictures by Matthew Brady, Alexander Gardner and Timothy O'Sullivan, as well as work by Henri Cartier-Bresson and Man Ray.

Japan rebuffs Rice, won't import US beef

TOKYO—Japan on Saturday refused to say when it would buy US beef again after Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made a personal appeal for it to remove import-stopped over fears of mad cow disease.

Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono told reporters after talks with Rice that Tokyo would make a decision on buying beef at an "appropriate" time.

"We fully realize this issue has deeply concerned the United States and Japan has been working to resolve this issue," he said.

"We are doing all we can to stop this issue from harming Japan-US ties," Machimura said a joint news conference.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who has been directly lobbied on beef imports by US President George W. Bush, stressed that the trade row was only one issue between the close allies.

"She didn't just come here over beef," Koizumi told reporters after meeting the secretary of state. "Her visit is not to talk about beef."

US members of Congress from farm states have called for trade sanctions against Japan, formerly the top overseas market for US beef, unless it resumes buying. Japan says it is waiting for its health experts to approve a way to ensure the meat is safe, a process which could take months. AFP

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Life tube of brain-damaged US woman removed

PINELLAS PARK, Fla.—Doctors removed the feeding tube that has kept a brain-damaged Florida woman alive for 15 years Friday after US lawmakers voted to prolong her life by subpoenaing her to appear before Congress.

The feeding tube was removed from Terri Schiavo, the woman at the heart of a long right-to-die battle, at 1:45 p.m., and she was expected to die in seven to 14 days.

Her husband's lawyer called the last-minute attempt by US congressional Republicans to keep the tube in place "nothing short of thuggery" and called Democratic "grandstanding" for failing to thwart it.

Schiavo has been left brought to a stop such tube since a heart attack starved her brain of oxygen in 1990, leaving her in what the courts declared was a permanent vegetative state.

Her husband and legal guardian, Michael Schiavo, said she would not have wanted to live in that condition and won permission to remove the feeding tube.

He was not in his wife's room at the Woodside Hospice in Pinellas Park, Florida, when the feeding tube was removed in what his lawyer, George Felos, described as a "very calm" and prayerful procedure. But her husband was at her bedside later, Felos said.

Republican congressional leaders made the last-minute bid to keep the tube in place by subpoenaing Terri Schiavo to appear before hearings and committees later in the month, a move that would have granted her protection as a witness in a congressional inquiry.

House of Representatives Majority Leader Tom DeLay called removing the feeding tube "an act of barbarism."

"Terri Schiavo is alive... she is as alive as you or I, and as such we have a moral obligation to protect and defend her from the fate premeditated by the Florida courts," DeLay said.

Felos said the congressional action was "callous; it was shocking, it was disgusting and I think all Americans should be very alarmed about that."

"They cannot walk over the dying body of Terri Schiavo for political gain," he added.

Her parents, Bob and Mary Schindler, are fighting to keep her alive, saying she responds to them and would improve with rehabilitation and have lobbied lawmakers to intervene.

"There's devastated," their lawyer, David Gibbs said after the tube was removed.

Congressional leaders joined the subpoena after failing to enact legislation allowing federal courts to review the case.

The Florida court's have consistently ruled in Michael Schiavo's favor and the US Supreme Court has refused three times to intervene.

Michael Schiavo said Friday night he would not give up his campaign even though Terri was not believed to be in pain.

"I won't give it up. Terri is my life," he said on CNN's "Larry King Live." "I'm going to carry out her wishes to the very end. This is what she wanted. It's not about the Schindlers, it's not about me, it's not about Congress. It's about Terri."

The order to remove the feeding tube was briefly stayed while the Florida judge presiding over the case, Circuit Judge George Greer, held a telephone hearing to consider the congressional effort to intervene.

Greer rejected that bid and reinstated the order allowing removal of the tube. Congressional lawyers appealed the decision before the Florida Supreme Court, which rejected it.

Late Friday in yet another attempt to keep Schiavo alive, the House committee on government reform made an emergency appeal to the US Supreme Court to have Schiavo's feeding tube reinserted, but that application was denied.

"But Some appeal came after House and Senate Republican leaders vowed to work through the weekend on new legislation to save Schiavo's life. Reuters

SCHEDULED to die from her mother, Mary Schindler, in this Aug. 11, 2001, image taken from videotape and released by the Schindler family. ...r

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Car bomb explodes in Lebanon capital

BEIRUT—A car bomb exploded in a mainly Christian eastern suburb of Beirut early on Saturday, wounding at least six people and ending fresh fears of a renewed cycle of violence.

A Reuters correspondent at the scene said the blast destroyed the first floor of an apartment block, blew out windows in surrounding buildings and gouged a large crater in the road. Cars parked nearby were wrecked.

"I was standing under the building and we heard a huge explosion and there were a big cloud of dust, and glass flew everywhere. We saw this car just flyin[g] the air and land on the street right in front of us," said witness Rany Ayoub.

It was unclear whether the attack had a political motive. A security source said a bingo hall may have been the target of the bombing, which occurred after midnight. The bingo hall was not damaged apart from some broken windows.

The vehicle containing the bomb appeared to have been in a car park.

Security forces and ambulances flooded the area. Hospital officials said at least six people had been wounded.

Lebanon has been rocked by political turmoil since Feb. 14 when former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri was killed in a car bomb attack, for which many Lebanese hold Syria responsible.

Damascus denies the charge.

Syria, under international pressure particularly from US President George W. Bush, has begun pulling its troops out of its tiny neighbor after a three decade presence.

Many analysts and politicians warn tensions are evident in the precarious political, religious and communal balance achieved since Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war. They say political tensions could spill into violence.

Christian opposition leader Michel Aoun said on Friday he hoped to end 14 years of exile and return to Lebanon within weeks, as soon as the Syrians had completed their pullout.

About one-fifth of the population and long Syria's most vocal opponents, the Maronite Christians have been ostracized in the past few weeks' patriotic demanding the withdrawal of Syrian troops.

Syria completed the first phase of its troop pullout from Lebanon on Thursday.

A Lebanese security source said 4,000 to 5,000 Syrian troops had returned home since the pullout plan was announced on March 5, leaving 5,000 to 10,000 in eastern Lebanon.

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan urges Syria to fully withdraw its forces before Lebanese election due in May. AP

Tittle Hayes: (1) handout picture released from the Imperial Household Agency shows Japanese Princess Sayuko and her fiance Yoshiki Kuroda enjoying hors-d'oeuvres on the Imperial Palace grounds in Tokyo. —

Japanese emperor's only daughter formally engaged

TOKYO—The only daughter of Japan's Emperor Akihito, Princess Sayuko, was formally engaged to an urban planner Saturday following a traditional ceremony held at the imperial palace.

Dressed in a long, white dress embroidered with cherry blossoms, the 35-year-old princess, accompanied by Akihito and Empress Michiko, received betrothal gifts prepared from commoner Yoshiki Kuroda, the royal household said.

Sayuko is due to marry her 29-year-old fiance, who works at the Tokyo metropolitan government, later this year, an official for the Imperial Household Agency said.

After the ceremony, called "Nosai no Gi," Sayuko said in a statement: "I would like to express my deep gratitude to both the emperor and the empress for blessing us and for having [Yoshi] for [my] cherished ancestors."

The two families exchanged gifts of sacred rice wine known as sake, the agency official said.

In Japan, sea bream is a celebratory fish and is often served on ceremonious occasions such as weddings. Sake and silk are traditional Japanese gifts.

Sayuko, an avid bird watcher, who works as an interpreter for an orthopaedic hospital, will be relinquishing her royal title after marrying to Kuroda in accordance with Imperial House Law.

Japan's Crysanthemum Throne, the world's oldest royal line, is under an unprecedented spotlight because of concerns about the health of Sayuko's mom-in-law Crown Princess Masako, and a debate about whether laws of succession should be changed to allow a female to ascend to the throne.

The Nov. 9 birth has been a boon to the Japanese royal family since 1965.

Crown Prince Naruhito, the eldest son of Akihito's three children, went public in May last year with concerns that his wife Masako, a former diplomat, was suffering from royal life and that was affecting her health.

After avoiding public duties for more than a year Masako, diagnosed as suffering from a mental disorder related to stress, appeared on the Imperial Palace balcony to wish well-wishers. AFP

Charles-Camilla wedding blessing to be televised

LONDON—Britain will be able to watch the church blessing of next month's wedding of Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles live on television, royal officials said Friday, although the marriage itself remains private.

The religious service on April 9 at St. George's Chapel inside Windsor Castle, the royal family's home just west of London, will be broadcast in Britain, Charles' Clarence House office said.

"It has been agreed that the service of blessing and dedication will be televised live," a spokesperson said.

The blessing for the union of the heir to the British throne and his long-time partner will be led by Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, spiritual head of the Church of England, and Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, the leader of Britain's Roman Catholics.

However, the official marriage ceremony earlier that day at Windsor Guildhall—essentially the town hall—will remain a private, low-key affair, with just 30 people and no clergy, the office said.

The couple will then travel to Scotland to spend their honeymoon at Birkhall, the late Queen Mother's residence in Aberdeenshire. It is a favorite destination for Charles and Camilla, who will officiate at the upcoming Ghyrston Ball-day Easter Show in late March, a spokesperson for Prince Charles said Friday. AFP

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HONEY FROM, ER, COW MANURE

Bangladeshi children tie cow dung cakes under the sun beside an embankment in Dhaka March 19. People from the slums in Dhaka collect cow dung from different cattle markets to make cakes that they use as fuel for cooking and get some money by selling them.

7 Iraqis killed in new bomb attack

BAGHDAD—At least seven Iraqis died Saturday, including three policemen blown up as they burned a rudimentary barrier, as protesters gathered in London to demand an end to the occupation of Iraq two years after the US-led invasion.

The policemen were killed and seven others wounded after a bomb exploded in the trunk of a car parked in front of a police checkpoint in Sadr City, Uqaili said.

Three of those wounded were in critical condition at Kindi's general hospital, an emergency services doctor said.

The policeman killed on Friday died when a patrol went to investigate a bag that two masked men had left in the street near the police academy, and a bomb inside exploded, Lt. Col. Hussein Arif said.

In other violence, an Iraqi soldier and two civilians, one an interpreter working for coalition forces, were killed in the north of the country, and the body of a man shot in the head execution-style was found.

Meanwhile, on the eve of the March 20, 2003 launch of the US-led invasion, some 100,000 people were expected to march through central London and there would be outside the US embassy to protest at the month-old conflict, organisers said.

Starring at Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park at 1 p.m. and ending at Trafalgar Square, the demonstrations were to have speeches by antiwar campaigners such as the mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, and former Guantanamo Bay inmate Shafiq Mubenga.

"We need help to make this demonstration as big as possible," the organizer Stop The War Coalition, said on its website.

"With rumors of an attack on Iran in June and the demonstration being a matter of weeks before the general election it would be fantastic to have many hundreds of thousands of people expressing their outrage against this," it said.

On Wednesday, antiwar protestors started to set up a "peace camp" in Trafalgar Square, not far from the Houses of Parliament, as part of preparations for the demonstrations, which is supported by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. AFP

Pakistan to upgrade nuke-arm capability

ISLAMABAD—President Pervez Musharraf vowed Saturday to further upgrade Pakistan's nuclear capability to match a "strict adherence" to non-proliferation so he watched the test firing of a long-range missile which can carry a nuclear warhead.

"The nation's nuclear capability which existed till the December 31 deterrent, has undergone a quantum jump in its capability and will continue to receive the highest national priority," a military statement quoted Musharraf as saying.

The military ruler alleged opposition claims that the Feb. 26 test of the cruise missile showed Pakistan's nuclear arsenal was still rudimentary, were "totally baseless and motivated to create confusion."

"The capability was best to stop, will continue to go from strength to strength in accordance with requirements," Musharraf said.

Neighboring states, particularly nuclear-armed rival India, were given no justification of the test, "as per existing practices, as a confidence building measure," the statement said.

Pakistan conducted all cruise tests in May 1998 after rival India conducted similar detonations. Both countries have active missile programmes.

Pakistan said its missile has a latter history of accidents, mainly over the Muslim country's area of Kashmir which is divided between the two and claimed by both in full.

Two of the country's three-way tests since 1998 were reported yesterday, Indepen- dent from the trade in 1947 have been over Kashmir.

But the fourth Asian rivals have been engaged in a peace dialogue since January last year. AFP

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Business Director, Asia Pacific

BAP okays int'l stints for 13 refs

THERE'S no substitute for actual exposure.

With this in mind, the Basketball Association of the Philippines has decided to send the country's best amateur referees to international competitions.

The BAP will be sending 13 of its top national referees to two prestigious tournaments at events—The Super Basketball League in Taipei, Taiwan, and the Asian Wheelchairs Competition in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia—as a further upgrade in their officiating skills.

BAP secretary general Godwin Lim recently inked an agreement with Chinese Taipei Basketball Association (CTBA) secretary general Steven Yi Hao for an exchange program of technical development in line with the thrust to upgrade the quality of officiating of both associations.

The BAP is set to dispatch four batches of three referees from April 7 to May 2 in the exchange program focuses more on the technicalities of three-man officiating.

Three referees will actually call the shots in officiating games of the Super Basketball League—Taiwan's No. 1 cage league were World-wide Cheng-Ta (SBP) and Hua Shenkuan.

Gil Regis, Arnold Peñaflorida and Jerry Jimenez compose the first batch in officiate in the SBL from April 7-11 while Ferdinand Pascual, Carlos Ramirez and Richard Reigars are to be second batch on April 13-16.

George Magalso, Noriel Macatuno and Aurelio Jimenez are to the third batch set to blow their whistles in the SBL on April 23-25 while in the last batch set April 28-May 2 are Anthony Bell, Bells Sanchez and Pascual.

International referee for wheelchair Edgar Lagrosa has been appointed as one of the games officials of the Asian Wheelchairs Competition in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, this April.

SHELL import Wesley Wilcox tries to pass out of an Alaska double team Friday night. The Aces beat the Turbo Chargers, 88-82.

Pals, Beermen seek solo lead

A WELL-RESTED Talk 'N Text squad tackles battle-weary San Miguel Beer in the 2005 Governor Manalo PBA Fiesta Conference today at the Araneta Coliseum.

The Phone Pals return to action at 6:15 p.m. a week after pitching up a second straight win at the expense of the San Lorenzo Ruiz Builders, who were forced to play two overtimes before losing to the Phone Pals in Dimo City last Thursday.

The Builders are itching to recover from their defeat as they collide against the Bulls Tuesday in the other game set 6:30 p.m.

"San Miguel will certainly make us bleed for every point," said Talk 'N Text coach Joel Banal.

"But it will be a good test for us and we hope to catch up with them on both ends of the floor," he added.

Banal said he'd like to see a flashy, high-scoring league but his assumption seems to be far from reality as Dimo enough for the Phone Pals.

"Yeah is doing what he's supposed to do. He's been filling the vacuum left by Art Dimaunal," said Banal.

"Through he doesn't score that much, I don't complain. With Ear I can expect a huge game in the middle. It's like having his second," he added.

The Phone Pals hope to stay in the lead with a third straight win against the Beermen, who are in second with a 3-1 record.

Danny Ildefo has been churning out impact-caliber performances so far, making it look as if the Beermen have another reliable import aside from the 6-foot-10 Chris Burgess.

Ildefo's career-high 42 points broke the hearts of the Bolters during the Beermen's double-overtime win on Thursday.

With three losses in four outings, the Bolters are expected to go all out and end their slump against the Express.

Tubinis Bryan, who isn't worth of a dozen for the Bolters, is expected to have the backing of import Bellis Anthony Willis, a 35-year NBA veteran.

Coach Bong Ramos and the Express have been getting good numbers from Miller but they wouldn't mind to their drive all the way as it's been tame to Pamilton and Chad Anne Amores

Ref was 61

ALBERTO "Beto" D. de la Cruz, a former referee of the Philippine Basketball Association, died on March 15 at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center.

He is survived by his wife Amelita; children Alberto Jr., Lloyd and Aimee; daughters-in-law Cedelicia and Sheryll Anne; son-in-law Michael Arre, and grandchildren.

His body lies in the Garden Chapel, Arlington East, in Pasig City. There will be a Mass before interment today in the Evergreen Memorial Park at 1 p.m.

ARNALD

Dumaguete to host Asian U cagefest

NATIONAL inter-collegiate champion Silliman University of Perpetual Help Dalta System, Philippine Maritime Institute and National University will see action in the 4th Asian University Basketball Championship to be hosted by Dumaguete City Sports Assn 12-18.

Basketball Association of the Philippines (BAP) secretary general Graham Lim said the three schools made their return because of their 1-2-3 finish in last month's National Students Basketball Championships, which served as qualifying tournament for the Asian University Championships.

"We want to give our collegiate teams the chance to play in a top-level tournament like the Asian University Championships," said Lim, who is the chair of the AUBC Board. "Other participants will come from Korea, Japan, China, Chinese Taipei and Thailand."

PBA promoter Carl Morsky Ong Chiong-Bio is vice chairwoman the members are Dr. Oyodjanrillo Sakaran Dudsonsiol, Shin Dong Pa Howol, Weng Jen Sen (Chinese Taipei) and Lu Guo-Jie (China).

Lim also thanked Negros Oriental Governor George Arnaiz, for giving his all-out support to the AUBC.

"This is the first time that the AUBC will be held out of town and we would like to express our gratitude to Gov. Arnaiz, who assured that his province will be ready to host the event," added Lim. The NBBC was also held in Dumaguete City early this month.

Bigger NBC set this year

AFTER a resounding success in its inaugural run last year, the National Basketball Conference (NBC) championship promises to be bigger and better this year.

From a record 180 teamed in its opening in Cagayan de Oro in June to a thrilling national finals between Skype-backed Tribu Bagito (Cebu Tribes) and Tagum Agro Agila (Davao Eagles) featuring hundreds of thousands of rage fans from to Ate Dumaic City in the South to Baguio City in the north.

No doubt, NBC has drilled the road belt by the defunct MBA.

"The people's response to our league has been so overwhelming. We're grateful that we have succeeded in our efforts to restore the community-based concept started by the MBA," said NBC president/Sultanate "Tax" Padilla.

The NBC has expanded its roster from eight to 10 this year. The expansion teams are the Barangay Jam of vice mayor and actor TV host Angle Tiburon and the Valencia Golden Harvest of Mayor Jose Galanta Jr.

The league, now sanctioned by the Basketball Association of the Philippines, is being run by chair Louie Alistaff and secretary general Tito Narvas. PAP-affiliated referees will officiate under the supervision of referee supervisor Jaime de Leon and technical committee head Adrian Rodriguez.

BAP secretary Graham Lim has tasked NBC to form a strong selection for the annual Hoops Dan Cup in Manila, Taiwan, on May 25-29. NBC will also hold an international invitational tourney after the regular season featuring top hoopsmen, the BP Cebuana Lhuillier team and invited teams from Japan and Chinese Taipei.

NBC name will also hold tourney games with 6/36 chevron Lhuillier, which is preparing for the Southeast Asian Games here in November-December.

Other NBC officials are Dennis Villa-Ignacio, vice president; Michelle Gaston and Michelle Dizon, south and south operations heads, respectively; Wesley Sprdiner and Upriano Cale, sales, and Alden Shen, media affairs.

Defending champion Tribu Bagito of Dumaguete Lito Villatuya Jr. is confident of keeping the title, while the Iloilo Pioneers of Robert Uy vowed to field a stronger team this year.

Meanwhile, the NBC free agent camp will be held on March 29 from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Philsports gym in Mahan City. Interested players may call Michelle Gaston at Michelle Dizon at 8111374.

Letran vs Ateneo in Micaba

LUCENA—Letran goes up against Ateneo and Adamson University faces University of the Philippines on Monday, March 21 in semifinal matches in the NCAA's inter-school basketball tournament at the Tambayan gym in Quezon.

The Knights, who finished the eliminations with a 9-5 card, have the twice-to-beat edge over the Blue Eagles (5-4) in their 6 p.m. contest.

The Salvos (7-2) in their game at 4:30.

The other teams saw action in the tourney, San Sebastian College, Mapua Tech and University of Perpetual Help finished tied from fifth to seventh at 4-5, followed by National University (3-6), Arkid Gil University (3-6) and Jose Rizal University (3-9).

The Knights accomplished a sweep of their elimination games recently by beating the Stormers, 81-74.

Roger Ilustrisimo, Ronald Addawe and Aaron Aranzado led the Knights with 16, 14 and 11 points, respectively.

Abby Santos and Nestor David carried the load for UP with 13 and 11 points, respectively.

Flyweight bouts on 'Fistorama'

SAMPUNGS "Fistorama" ticket features two exciting bouts in the flyweight and featherweight divisions. Marlon Maltos-Junior with Ronnie Bedonia in four rounds at 112lb while Shirlon Cabrido trades punches with Michael Rosano in six rounds at 126 lb. Bts fights were held recently at the Joe Cojuangco Building Arena in Bagumbayan, Taguig City.

Tonight's "Fistorama" is slated thirty-twelfth by the United States, Europe, the Middle East, Australia, Japan, Hong Kong and other parts of the world through ABS-CBN Global's The Filipino Channel.

Amusing's Fistorama supported by Samsung, Yamboy, PCSO and Shopcom is aired at 4 p.m., Sundays on RPN 9. The longest-running boxing sports program, "Golf Pinoy," featuring the finals in the collegiate division of the Vista Subdivision Friendly Volleyball Challenge provides the boxing program at 3 p.m.

Real Spicy eyes revenge vs Speed Majesty today

By Edwin Villanueva, Correspondent

REAL Spicy's otherwise brilliant campaign last year was ruined by the rein setbacks he suffered against Speed Majesty.

This afternoon, Jhonlie Aguirre's prized stallion will get the chance to seek revenge when he leads a classy bunch of Triple Crown candidates dashing in the P1 million Chairman's Cup at the Santa Ana Park.

But Speed Majesty won't no longer pose as the biggest obstacle to Real Spicy's goal to keep his winning streak going and fortify his reputation as this year's hottest bet in the coming three-leg series.

Instead, it will be Speed Advantage, Speed Majesty's coupled entry, who is looming as the main stumbling block in the 1,600-meter race billed as a preview of the Triple Crown's opening leg—the Cojuangco Cup.

Real Spicy, last year's Juvenile Champion, is currently on an 8-race victory binge, the last this leg a Clive Hermos race on March 2 which he used as warm-up for this afternoon's event bossing PCSO chair Sergio Valencia.

"Finishing hands dyn. Trained eh easy gaye ko. Very ready. It seems he's also excited as I am," said an ecstatic Ike Eldonia, who'll be riding Real Spicy for the 11th time.

The son of 1998 Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes winner Real Quiet, Real Spicy first collided against Speed Majesty in the Santa Ana Juvenile last July and was headed to come in nine spots, the same technique the latter used in snatching yesterday's win in the first leg of the Juvenile Colt championship a month later.

But a leg injury sidelined Speed Majesty just as Real Spicy started to flex his might against the other 2-year-olds around, leaving all bets resting unreal with a Clive Hermos romp last Aug. 17.

Real Spicy is also spearheading a 4-pronged bid rather by the Eugenio Jubilo stable also fielded in Euro Jimbo, Otto Mann and Jonie Jocosa.

Euro Jimbo will also try to get back at Speed Advantage who beat the daughter of Ascension of Glance in the first leg of the "Road to Triple Crown" where Speed Majesty came in a flagged out ninth among 11 runners.

Antonio Ahmad Jr. remains as Speed Advantage's skipper and despite the lackluster performance, the Yutaka Stable decided to retain Lonie Salinas as Speed Majesty's partner.

"It's like to invite all the leading horses to watch the two finishing most of the year's Triple Crown candidates. Maybe as less as two or Cojo's are each other at Santa Ana," said Philcontinental Jimmy Ong, who said that the winner will garner P600,000.

The featured event that will also award P225,000, P125,000 and P50,000 to the second to fourth placers likewise lured Jon Almeda's Golden Nectar, Fineza and Wilcon 9's Elliott's D As in Dear, the Mike Rabbit's In Command, Thy wellbeloved and Montecastro.

Jesse Cruz (also Rhonda's place as Euro Jimbo, while Marcelino Dungca and Ronald Baldonado will retain the rides on One Water and Artist Account, respectively.

Clockings-wise, Real Spicy is the home to beat in the race, tacking a fast effort of 1:40 flat over the distance. Speed Advantage's fastest is a 1:41 flat.

I'm not the original respondent—Estimo

NATIONAL Chess Federation of the Philippines secretary general Jimmy Santos yesterday said it is not him but former NCFP president Mar Dichoso and Grandmaster Eugene Torre who must be held responsible for the malversation charges recommended to be filed against him by the National Bureau of Investigation.

Dichoso said the "original respondent in the case who committed the supposed fraud, the NBI and Lawyer Mel Dichoso, who was then the President of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines (NCFP).

"To recall, it was Atty. Dichoso and GM Torre who solicited the amount from the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) to pay the plane fare of the 10 players who competed in the 2002 World Youth Chess Championship in Greece," said Estimo, reacting to the PSC decision to verify against him for the alleged malversation of government funds as claimed by PSC executive director Guillermo Iroy.

"For reasons known only to the PSC, it released the money at all instances of 11 athletes and 7 officials. The truth is there were only 9 players who went to Greece accompanied by GM Torre."

Estimo said that when the PSC released the amount, he and Torre used the money to buy plane tickets of the players. No allowances were requested in the letter of Atty. Dichoso and GM Torre.

"When the players arrived from the tournament, Mr. Diamante Campomanes told them that they had allowances, obviously referring to the erroneous voucher issued by the PSC, and so they started asking us since the same," Estimo said.

Estimo added that Dichoso directed him to request the PSC to "realign the financial assistance to conform to the purpose for which it was solicited."

The NCFP secretary general said the PSC failed to act on this request. "Also, putting us in the NCFP as a blacklist of sort were doing."

Torre, Paragua lead Filway chess entries

GRANDMASTER Eugene Torre and 109 candidate Mark Paragua head the cast of the Mindanao leg of the Filway/Time Life Open Active Chess Championship set April 2-3 at the Intercontinental Area of JM City Driver in Davao City.

Like the inaugural leg held in Manila, the tournament sponsored by Filway Marketing president/CEO Hernan Tagayuna is divided into four divisions—the Open, Women's, Boys' 12 under) and Girls' 12 under).

The tournament offers P50,000 to the Open champion, P10,000 to the Women's champion and P4,000 each to the Boys' 12 under) and Girls' 12 under) champions.

Other seasoned woodpushers expected to participate are Filway Time Lines/MCB leg champion IM Ronald Bancod, reigning Asian U20 zonal champion IM Ronald Bakilan, Bicol Hotel Mel Sales, Mike Jansen Cuarla, Mario Ibañez, Reggie Oliva, Prospero Cruz and 80+ time intensive champion Arren Mopas for inquiries, contact project director Willie Alador at (082) 225 9918 or tournament director Antonio Sabaldica at (045) 598-7233. MP Alador (bernardino, Guerrabasa)

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OPINION

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World Bank democracy

EDITORIAL

BY TRADITION, it is the United States which nominates the president of the World Bank; Europeans choose the managing director of the International Monetary Fund. In nominating the controversial Paul Wolfowitz, a leader of the American neoconservative movement and the most influential No. 2 man in the history of the Pentagon, US President George W. Bush has prompted other industrialized countries to rethink that tradition.

We doubt whether much will come out of this collective soul-searching. The Europeans, too, have a stake in the post-Iraq, post-confection cleaning of transatlantic relations; they will feel needlessly provoked but, in the end, they will grit their teeth and swallow their pride.

The rest of the world, of course, has no say in the matter. To be blunt about it: beggars can't be choosers, especially when it comes to choosing the new creditor-in-chief.

But those of us who have been on the sometimes sharp end of the World Bank stick can certainly use the next few days—while Europe thinks and US allies in Asia, Latin America and the Middle East come to terms with Wolfowitz's nomination—to raise the necessary questions.

We ask, because the man Bush affectionately calls "Wolfie" is one of the principal architects of the US invasion of Iraq. The war was staged on fact-insistent grounds: there was an immediate terrorist threat from Iraq, there were no weapons of mass destruction, there was no conspiracy between Saddam Hussein's odious regime and Osama bin Laden's equally monstrous terrorist network. All of those have been confirmed many times since the invasion was launched two years ago. But have Wolfowitz and the rest of the Bush administration's war council taken the opportunity to render their regrets or issue an apology for essentially misleading the American nation and the rest of the world?

Regrettably, no. They have all taken refuge behind the bastard of democracy.

Democracy, Churchill famously said, is the worst form of government, until you consider the alternatives. Many of the alternatives in the Middle East are unsavory indeed, and like many around the world, we share the hope that democracy's meandering march will also take it through that volatile region.

But the end does not justify the means. Wolfowitz and company, however, think it does. Now that the invasion of Iraq has been belatedly rationalized as the seizing of a democratic beachhead in the Middle East, the lies and mistakes that led to the war are to be filed away and forgotten.

If in the face of incontrovertible evidence, Wolfowitz cannot bring himself to admit any errors to judgment, can we expect him to continue the reform of the World Bank—a process which requires him to publicly accept mistakes? It would be out of character.

We worry about his appointment then, because it might cause the return of the unyielding, 'we-know-what's-good-for-you arrogance of the "old" World Bank.

We also worry about his commitment to democracy when serious money is at stake. Can Wolfowitz take the next step and lead the World Bank in the direction of debt relief?

If there is one single policy that will help struggling democracies around the world infuse new life into democratic institutions, it is debt relief. The policy will release billions of dollars into the necessary work of easing poverty, stimulating the economy, raising living standards, and investing in education. Instead of essentially working for the creditors, many of whom have already profited from the debt, developing countries around the world can finally work for their own benefit. Like democracy's rising tide, that of economic growth can lift all boats too.

But for many creditors, the real issue behind debt relief is the after-forgotten conflict between capitalism's requirements and democracy's needs. When billions of dollars are at stake, whose side will Wolfowitz be on?

The decline of English

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

I WAS distressed to read a recent report in this paper that students from public elementary and secondary schools are deficient in English, Math and Science as revealed in the results of the National Achievement Test (NAT) and the High School Readiness Test (HSRT) conducted recently by the Department of Education.

The scores of the members of the 1st Congress over the years but have remained "flat," said Undersecretary Juan Miguel Luz. There has been practically no progress in developing the students' aptitudes in the subjects tested, where they scored last year from 32 to 38 percent only (where the passing grade is at least 60 percent).

I am not much disturbed by the students' poor showing in Math and Science as I myself have little interest or intelligence in those subjects; for example, Chemistry and Calculus had been challenges for me, but have they proved manifestly necessary for me in my chosen career? On the other hand, my interest in English was attracting me toward no much disappointment and regret for what is a subject close to my heart and useful to my work.

There was that time when we were still under the American administration and English was the language of choice in the country. The various regional groups spoke their separate native dialects—Tagalog, Ilocano, Pampango, Pangasinan, Cebuano, Ilonggo, Waray, Maranao, etc.—but all of them spoke and understood English. This was true not only of the educated people in the cities but also of the rural folk who could manage to go to school before they devoted their full time to their farms.

Each linguistic group had its different and distinguishing pronunciation of English, but they managed to understand each other in their language better than with the different regional dialects despite their many common sentiments and, yes, also sometimes honest-to-goodness differences. For example, "Ideya" in Pampanga is already "Ideo" in Manila. A lady assistant has a lot of vanes in Cebu when she promised to cut off "Ingay" which means rice in Tagalog but in Tagalog has at least promised to Ilocanos.

Back was the popularity of English then that it soon replaced the newer vigencies that used to be written in Spanish. "Se Alquila" became "For Rent" and "Se Vende" translated to "For Sale." Only a few of the old Spanish names have been preserved like "Ramon Magsaysay," "La Hacienda," and "Cara Alba," but the others have been Americanized to "Doris Day and Regis Eidan," "Susie Martin's Emporium," and "Loren Day Store." Even the old "serenata" was renamed "aguinaldo," then promised to "court house," and is now a prime "rondalla."

In the old Negros High School, where I studied before the Pacific War, we had an American principal, Mrs. Sarah M. Englund, and excellent Filipino teachers in English composition and literature. I remember all four of them with appreciation—Mr. Tolentin, Mrs. Bermudez, Mrs. Ledesma and Miss Vázquez—who taught us the beauty of the language and its English and American writers, as well as the translated works of Cruz de Hamptonians, Leo Tolstoy, Miguel de Cervantes, and others.

We read the classics in unabridged English versions as continued in the convenient pamphlets now available in the bookstores for those who would rather play basketball. The handy Classic Illustrated was still unknown at that time and so we had to read "The Three Musketeers" and "The Count of Monte Cristo" from the book itself. We were also familiar with Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death" speech, the tragic romances of Evangeline, and the melancholia of Edgar Allan Poe.

We were taught the art of letter writing, which many students now probably do not know or care. When I write, which doesn't die off these days, or better yet, pen out ones. And wanting does use were regular cursive spelling and it's or to get to the ... [illegible] but I m so. I'll never get the hang of this new-fangled text English. I'm afraid it is here to stay, and will further lower the scores of the newborns taking the NAT and the HSRT. (That will be coming.)

I don't know how things are now with our public libraries, but during my student days they were quite popular with book lovers. They were well-stocked even with the current best sellers that we could borrow and read for free, and some much for more. I was a regular customer and used to visit that of my cousin in Intramuros, Manila, or the Municipal Library at the ground floor of the old Legislative Building in Plaridel Street. Every class was an adventure.

I feel that modern times have changed much since my classmates and I graduated from high school before the war broke out in 1941. We were more attracted to books than those to baseball. Superman and the comics League, the movies, racing, narrow music, and other modern fascinations. I am sure we would have passed those many Dep[illegible] tests with consolidated honors.

Boiling

MOMENTS

Fr. Jerry M. Orbos, SVD

I READ somewhere recently that one of three persons is ugly. So, if you look at the person on your left and he or she is handsome or beautiful, definitely do not. (You're in a person's company.) If you look at the person on your right and he or she is handsome or beautiful, may problema ka rin! (You have a problem!)

* * *

The Passion of Christ (Mt. 26, 14-27:66)

In an account of the events that happened to Jesus from the time he said goodbye to His disciples at the last supper, till He was arrested, tortured and crucified at Calvary. Ugly is the word that best describes these last memories of Jesus. Ugly were the torturers and executioners. Ugly was the crowd. The first Good Friday was the ugliest day in the history of mankind.

* * *

It's Palm Sunday once again, and the Holy Week is ahead of us. So how do we make this week holy? Someone once said in jest that to make holy water you get ordinary water, boil your holy water you get ordinary water, boil your holy water until it is holy. Words in their particular time of the year when we are asked to boil all hell and eighteen out of our senses.

* * *

Boiling requires time, slow cooking time, low maintenance time. We just don't approach Holy Week with a little prayer here, and a little sacrifice there, then, presto, all christ, all chaos and lost good again. Don't prefer "instant holiness," just for the Holy Week. In other words, we must make time to really reflect and really immerse God, encounter, to others, and to His kind of His week. Allow yourself to be "boiled," to be contrasted, to be questioned and even to be "crucified."

* * *

Boiling requires space. How much boiling happens when you are always on the move, too much daily boiling happens either when you are out in a beach resort or on a vacation abroad. Imagine having a good vacation. Of course, you can find God anywhere this week. Just make sure you give Him space. Don't just be a thrill-seeking Antipoverite or Intramuros [illegible] Christmas that Holy Week).

* * *

Boiling requires some drying. Drying to smooth that is. Drying to one's true, for instance, and reaching out to God in humility and repentance. Drying to one's pride and reaching out to people. Drying to one's sensitiveness and reaching one's blessings with the poor and the less fortunate around us.

* * *

Yesterday was the feast of St. Joseph, Many of us, perhaps, did not even remember or take notice of it. But that's typical of St. Joseph who always remains silent and completely has no time in the limelight. He is and consistently can't forget our titles, our professions, our agenda, our deadlines, and just in.

I dare even say, forget your religious agenda of doing this and that, observing this and that, complying with this and that, just to fulfill an obligation or a tradition. You know why? Because compliance with rituals, instead of boiling us, has just burden us, giving us the sense of feeling good for having done the fulfillment of what is expected of us, and so we can go right on living the ugly life we are leading. Don't just be a Pharisaic[illegible] pulling strings as Samson Jesus (a pretending Christian).

* * *

This Holy Week, may we all take time to boil the hell out of our families and relationships and reach out to one another as brothers and sisters again. The passion, death, and resurrection of Christ are all about going beyond one's comfort zones to meet others. Perhaps, are we not really go out of our 'nest to destroy the walls we have made and build bridges again. May we all experience life-giving "resurrection moments" in our families and relationships especially this week.

* * *

As a nation, may the Lord help us boil out of our country which is so full of corrupt politicians and government leaders. Sad to say many of them would be here this Holy Week, they have left the abroad already for their much needed rest. (Dear Erap, what's fit [illegible] your people are suffering. The poor is [illegible] yet positive activities for us as a nation, as people, let us go back to the Lord with contrite hearts and ask Him to heal our land.

* * *

Join us in some holy boiling this Holy Week with our two churches here at Isdra Mission, Holy Tuesday, 6 p.m., St. James Church, Apalit, Pampanga; Holy Wednesday, 6 p.m.; APP Theater, Camp Aguinaldo; Holy Thursday, 9 a.m., Good Shepherd Seminar House, Aguinaldo. Good Friday 9 a.m.; Angels Hill, Tagaytay; Holy Saturday 9 a.m., Christ the King Seminary, Quezon City, Easter Vigil 9 p.m.

* * *

A moment with the Lord.

Lord, boil my hard heart and give me a soft heart. Amen.

A golden opportunity

RIVERLIE

Raimundo J. Faustino

• • •

In 1981, the Philippines hosted the Games for the first time. We were a total of 93 gold medals behind Indonesia but by having the home-crowd advantage for hosts of those "golds," we didn't make it as an overall champion. But we won the gold in track and basketball, so I guess that was what interested most for our people.

Ten years later, Manila again hosted the 11th SEA Games and for the first time, we came close to winning the overall championship, losing out only to Thailand by one point. If Indonesian tactics in Thailand in the soccer finals, we would have ended in a dead heat with our giant neighbor in the south. Indonesia, by the way, is the only country (historically) was the chair of the Organizing Committee for the Games which is the line from the Japanese president of the Philippine Olympic Committee (POC).

To better appreciate the national euphoria generated by the fantastic showing of our athletes, one must recall that we had last capped second a string of national relativism, which started with the assassination of Senator Ninoy Aquino at the Coronal airport and Regina City, followed by the usurpation of Mr. Marcos. There was also the October disaster brought about by heavy and continuous rains in the area bordering in the loss of hundreds of lives and billions of pesos worth of property. Then there was the Lupang Hinirang incident on the 1987 coup attempts and the increasing power failures which threatened economic recovery programs. As a result, Corazon, now with the Free Enterprise Holdings Corp., was being pressured by viewers in the private sector advising him to more for a peaceful economy or carry the risk of the country having the problems faced by the nation. But President Cory Aquino stood her ground and decided to proceed with the Games.

It turned out to be a wise decision. We were to tell of 55 gold, 67 silver and 87 bronze medals—the biggest harvest of athletic medals in the history of Philippine sports. Who were the heroes of those days? Let me mention just a few. There was Arnold Finger who won the men's 10,000 meter competition; Lydia de Vega, the women's 100-meter dash; and Elma Muros, the women's 100-meter hurdles and long jump. Eric Sidiuts and Akiat Thompson were our golden swimmers. In golf, it was Mary Orsua fortunately who was the only one to hit a hole-in-one win the tournament enjoyed by the visiting nations. It was the homegrown cheerleading to lead to important psychological edge.

In the last SEA Games held in Manila, Vietnam, the Vietnamese took full advantage of all those factors to post their first-ever championship in Southeast Asian athletic competitions. This for a country that had been at war for so many years, first against the French and then the Americans. In their minds, the Viets were not just because of host country advantages. They were because they prepared well for the Games. Their athletes were disciplined and trained. In an extraordinary way, the efforts of the sports development program of the former Soviet Union and East Germany in fact, interdependable sports officials, including our own Celso Dee, former POC president, now elder Vietnam the country to host in future SEA Games. Again, in his recent book, "The Philippine Adventure in the Philippines," spells out what it has to be done if we are to make progress in the sports arena.

• • •

For the Philippines, there are certain sports where we stand a good chance of collecting additional golds. Archery is one such sport. It has two major divisions, one using the recurve bow, which is the traditional equipment in Olympic competitions; the other is known as the compound bow and is open to anyone beyond the age of 18. Archery is expected to be a big event at the compound bow event. There has been no final decision on the matter but as a resident of the Cagayan Valley, I am hopeful that's the Philippine archers team led by Antera Pasion and Raul Aranbulo will win gold medals to lead the competition in the compound bow events of the First National Archery Council Pin in Bangkok. A U.S. archery observer reported that Bulacan Amaya Star of the Philippines showed that she could be a major force in this year's SEA Games when she helped her team score all the compound golds in the girls' division category." We have a lot of resources in training and preparing 12-16 men for a host-school team. In the end, the effort will not to only one gold medal. Perhaps we should recover one gold and silver for if we are to take full advantage of a golden opportunity.

Indomitable colleague

"We have it a hero in his wake," Mississippi, a French crisis, observed. The color known for many celebrities. The greatest of them all may be epitomized by the who, but since the great American has no survive, he simply continues on forever and forevermore, there is no self-attack about his former fame.

Driving a car when I first got word that Dr. Patricio F. Tan had turned for the worse following his operation because of severe infection.

HIGH BLOOD

Fernando P. Nanosa, M.D.

NOTE also like to know the outcome of the surgeonship and above, what makes their blood pressure always so high? Could it be something that all's well with their world and with themselves. —Ed.

After 40 years of close association with him as relative, confidant, friend and fellow anesthesiologist, I can claim to have known him well, including his strengths, his shortcomings and even his long ego.

He belonged to the normo-tensi. Nothing was good enough then could not need improvement. Most of his teaching years, he was conducting community service. (in Good Medicine, October 29, "Whenever you did to the least of my brethren, you did it to me.")

In bed, in a grand way, he showed his bravery, he passed on his gifts.

He used his own connoisseur played them at risk to long the health care delivery system at the place he retired to put aside most of the wrong that was in it. Even in his last days, many persons were unable to say anything. In fact, he served many persons without expecting in exchange any remuneration.

As if that was not enough, he initiated programs and set up facilities for training young doctors to be good surgeons. Many of the surgeons in the provinces are those who have difficulty above procedure, and he would speak in the back door to help any, again, after he. He was to the father figure in his former residents, trained and even of practitioner of other specialties. Many fraternity, minor public servants, colleagues and their families as well as clients of this Philippine Medical of history exalted themselves of his surgical services again.

When "things" become costly, he took the lead in the drive to bring health care costs down. Not lacking in adversaries, he was not short on ideas either. He led in improving the facilities and performance of the Bataan Doc Lady of Mercy Specialty Hospital—to make hospitalization less financially burdensome. That effort is how Bataan Hospital was founded.

In 1987, he became the first from outside Metro Manila to be appointed head of the Philippine Board of Surgery.

Grieving in Bataan after earning his diplomate in general surgery in the United States in the early '60s, he struggled to make it in a relatively comfortable life, as private children examinations, and also in the practice of surgery.

But his calling back to a country where elections were (and still are) extremely dishonest, where rivalry, where corruption was always the issue against the incumbent. Some say our fall guy might have gotten the ax, which must have for him no more than a rap on the knuckles, but major players pay much more.

Many in the country tried to do something about the mess, as they still try even now. There were citizens' assemblies, citizen members stood up to redress demagogues who manipulated election results. He was one of their leaders. He was in the thick of political battles, not as a protagonist, but mostly as the one who tried to bring the two sides to the table for effective public office himself. That was he was always supportive, as in the thinking area. But in the valley of choppers and counterchoppa, especially by people with their own self-interests to promote, he could not remain unscathed. His house was showered with rocks and he got the usual threats. Lesser men would have run to the sidelines for cover, but Pat chose to be suffered. He continued to drive long distances all by himself.

His accidents surely took a toll on his practice. He would be out of town and he had to be a jiffy while serving as Bataan District Governor in the early '70s and as Bataan's Information officer for San Asia shortly thereafter. But somehow, wherever it took him to help in a complex problem, he would manage to show up.

After John I, he became the provincial chair of the International Movements for Free Elections. He represented the country in a group of international observers elsewhere in South Africa after the dismantling of apartheid and in Bulgaria after the collapse of the Soviet Union. His observations were also a must to approach for first-known answers to questions about election laws.

Sometime in the waning years of the Marcos presidency, the province was split into two. In case the illegality of the move was wrong with a group of concerned Negritans, successfully petitioned the Supreme Court for reinstatement of the province.

In the 1987 Constitution, he also chaired the People's Initiative for Region 3. Not surprisingly, he stepped on a great many toes, for which he had his share of personal lawsuits. Still, he was unruffled, even when his anti-graft campaign was declared to be wrong by an opponent. Zero-sum thinking is the latest buzzword of the century. But even then, the blow the mistake, the author him were translated to different kyrgyzstan blowouts.

At the height of insurgency in the provinces in the late '80s, his familiar face appearing on TV joined our peace. He was in the thick of negotiations for the release, first, of an American Peace Corps volunteer, then later of a Japanese volunteer farmworker.

For his work with the Ombudsman, he received a presidential citation for community service during the term of President Cory Aquino and, again during the Ramos presidency, the "Ramonsaman" award, which he received in 1974 and which is the highest award a civilian person has for civic leadership. Perhaps, the most signal honor Jesse have been the one from his junior colleagues who named the Dr. Patricio T. Tan Surgical Society. The inducting citation of those whose attempts to defraud the people for Sunstarr should take be considered as honor.

There is a special picture of Pat showing him looking over his shoulder as I'm saying, "I've been called worse, carry on with my work. Inspector-ate."

Renato d'Ambra, M.D., Ph. is a past national president of the Philippine Chest Association.

The economics of dying

SAN FERNANDO CITY, La Union—If the pessimist sentence in the late '60s when my mother died, that's the wound had been. "It's the economics of dying," the wake was a quite affair—a few prayers by the family members and neighbors in our village, some of whom stayed up all night playing mahjong and cards or simply chatting and reminiscing. Dramatically, they would look at the coffin, sigh, shake their heads, and say a prayer or two. Some would recount remembering how my mother had been the community's wise person, nurse, teacher or leader in many prayer sessions during funerals, baptisms, Lenten rituals or other community activities. Others would tune us to lead the prayer. She was a very respected member of our community because she was always a helping hand for other people.

Her funeral rites were likewise simple, after which we buried her under a tree in the same cemetery she is interred now. Only a few relatives and friends showed some of the expenses, which did not amount to loads in those days.

Nearly 40 years later, my eldest sister Amarena Aquino Bilbao-en dies, and it's not anybody anymore. Death has changed its face.

After being stricken with pneumonia at her age, everyone thought she would get in a few days. But she recovered after a fashionable illnesses; she had an stay in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of a private hospital. Her children, relatives and friends showed some of the expenses, which did not amount to loads in those days.

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COMMENTARY

Belinda A. Aquino

were allowed and many of the viewers, lamenting the family well, waived their fees. Still, the bill came close to a million. Fortunately, the hospital allowed an installment plan for the balance after a three payment months.

But those were the days before boarding. The hi-tech jabs offered by an ever-pinching small business in town called Aces Funeral Homes was, according to my sources and nephew, already unavailable considering how much they would have to do. I had no idea how elaborate the funeral arrangements were until I was in charge of the wake evening during the wake period, by local music coming from a two-piece band provided by Aces, it went on till the wee hours of dawn, competing with the mahjong and card players. When the condition got sliced singing, they would play some tapes, which are also provided by Aces, and serve for the dead. This went on for several nights. When I inquired what the price tag would come to, it was anywhere from P60,000 to P100,000! But it was, I was informed, already cheaper considering that Aces provided the coffin, the hearse and so on. Then during the funeral rites in the church, Aces would provide uniformed (in mourning) pallbearers to carry the coffin. In short, they were giving first-class service to honor my late sister.

This avoid about funeral homes three days. It's no longer like during my mother's time when the main thing to worry about was the coffin. I gather from this that the economics of dying has become one of business many of the smaller funeral firms in town. In funeral services are now in demand all the way to the finish. It was founded by two hairdressing brothers. They certainly have put a thriving business in the funeral industry.

At this point, we are looking at an escalating bill of close to P2 million. But there's another issue per expense—limiting practically hundreds of people during those days and nights just to be ready for its wake. The going-to-lunches and cooking sessions were evident in my family. Sumptuous pigs, goats and chickens were brought home to the slaughtered and cooked in different ways. As is customary in our culture, when somebody dies, people drop in at all hours to pay their respects and then have to give them food. I cannot accurately guess the day-to-day expenses for food and drinks on a conservative basis, but the last dinner alone, after the burial, came to P30,000. The church expenses amounted to some P7,000. An additional expense was in the prayer meets in the homes of relatives. There was also the expenses of prayers, cake and sticaks to forty people to the cemetery and back to town, and the cost probably came to another P20,000. I lose track exactly is all over handed to impossible evidence.

In the midst of the grief over my sister's loss, we will do anything to honor our dead, whatever the cost. Not just for the sake of the dead. It also gives comfort to the living. "Let it be remembered," one of my cousins said wistfully, "that our mother had only a simple funeral." I'm sure she would have very sad. She would be very happy with what we are doing for her, even if she would have complained about the expense."

When a funeral one dies, you don't think about practical matters like costs and financial burdens, acting as you are stricken. It is overcome, especially at the time of death, always deserves the said. some sacrifice on the part of the living.

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Belinda A. Aquino is based at the University of the Philippines Los Baños where she is professor of history and dean of the College of Arts and Letters.

Popular religiosity

PUBLIC LIVES

Randy David

YOUNG, Hala Sandra, marks the first day of what is perhaps the most important week in the Christian calendar. Jesus, the Messiah, enters Jerusalem on a donkey. His reception provokes the Sanhedrin and he is arrested by the people with branches and palm fronds.

Being a Jew, he has come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread, two important events that recall the Israelites' escape from slavery in Egypt. The Roman government of Jerusalem are very watchful. The Jews have long anticipated their liberation, and such fiesta days keep the flame of freedom alive in their hearts.

The whole world of one's faith is filled with symbols that make the events of our everyday lives meaningful. The meanings do not reside in the events themselves, but in the memory and culture of the community to which we belong. The Christian faith, brought to our shores by the Spanish missionaries, gave this dominant religious ideal, but it did not erase the indigenous habits of our ancestors. The suppressed native beliefs, reconstituted in the encounter with the dominant religion and clothed in new names and forms, survived as popular religiosity. That faith

TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to ...
Editor Juan F. Sarmiento Jr.

Are we winning the war on poverty?

POVERTY incidence in the country had gone down during the first three years of the new millennium, according to the government. The National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) says that poverty incidence among Filipino families dropped by about 3 percentage points from 27.5 percent in 2000 to 24.7 percent in 2003.

The decline in poverty incidence came despite an 1.1 percent drop in the real income of families during the three-year period.

Final results of the 2003 Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES) that the National Statistics Office (NSO) released last month showed that the average family income of P145,121 in 2000 was worth only P130,594 in 2003 when adjusted for inflation.

During the period, total family income in Metro Manila, the richest region in the country, dropped by 14.7 percent.

The government decision to change the poverty lines explains the decline in poverty incidence despite the drop in real incomes.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) said the revision of the official poverty measurement methodology in 2003 led to the revision of national and regional poverty figures for 1997 and 2000.

In a report "Poverty in the Philippines: Income, Assets and Access," the ADB said the poverty head counts were lower because the new poverty lines were lower.

"For example, the old national poverty threshold for 2000 was P13,823 per person per year. The new poverty threshold for 2000 is P11,605 per person per year. The difference of about $58, a difference that reduced the poverty incidence by more than 5 [percentage points] from 33.7 percent of families to 28.4 percent of families in 2000," the multilateral agency said.

The ADB said it was "almost certain" that the poverty head count increased in 2000-2003 because the real average family income had declined.

The bank came up with the report before the NSO published the final results of the FIES for 2003.

Absolute number of poor has increased

By the Asian Development Bank

Analysts of income poverty trends in the Philippines must begin with a word of caution as a result of methodology changes over time.

Comparisons of poverty data across time series for the medium term are exciting that the data is based on the same assumptions. There are two overlapping series, the first from 1985 to 2000 and the second from 1997 to 2003. In other words, there are two sets of poverty figures for 1997 and 2000. The new methodology resulted in lower poverty head counts, and some of the trends were changed.

For example, depending on the series, movements in 1 and 3 are both correct: A. The *poverty incidence* of families increased from 11.8 percent to 11.7 percent between 1997 and 2000. The subsistence incidence increased by 0.1 percent, which means more hungry families. Urban poverty increased by 2 percent. (Old methodology) B. The poverty incidence of families increased from 25.1 percent to 28.4 percent between 1997 and 2000. The subsistence incidence fell by 0.5 percent, which means fewer hungry families. There was no change in urban poverty. (New methodology)

Under the old methodology, the magnitude of income poverty in the Philippines worsened from 1985 to 2000. The poverty incidence of families fell by 13.3 percent over the period 1985-2000, but this gain was more than offset by high population growth rates of 2.36 percent per year. The poverty incidence declined, but the actual number of poor people increased substantially. There were over four million more poor people in 2000 than there were in 1985.

Sustained economic growth from 2000 to 2003 has not been pro-poor. Though the Philippines experienced sustained growth in gross domestic product (GDP) from 2000 to 2003, preliminary results of the Family Income and Expenditure Survey indicate a 10-percent drop in real average family income. Families in Metro Manila suffered an almost 20-percent drop. The real income series, up to the latest decile of the population, actually stagnated over this period. The real average income of the bottom 30 percent contracted by about 6 percent from 2000 to 2003. Though 2003 poverty head counts have not yet been released, these signs point to an increase over 2000 poverty levels.

National figures mask substantial regional and provincial differences. The poorest regions in 2000 were the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), Bicol and Central Mindanao. The poorest provinces were Sulu, Maguindanao and Ifugao. In the 10 poorest provinces by poverty incidence in 2000 more than half of all families were poor.

Mindanao ranks at the bottom of most poverty indicators. The regions with the lowest poverty incidence in 2000 were Metro Manila, Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog. There are also the three most populous regions. With 40 percent of the national population, they contributed 34 percent of the total poor population in 2000.

Rural poverty incidence is much more pronounced than urban poverty incidence, but the number of urban poor families is increasing. The very high rural poverty incidence (41 percent of families in 2000) has remained virtually unchanged since 1988 (46.3 percent of families). The urban poverty incidence fell from 16.1 percent of families in 1988 to 15.9 percent in 2000; however, the absolute number or the magnitude of urban poor families grew by nearly 11 percent nationwide between 1997 and 2000. There are seven regions in which the number of urban poor families grew by more than 20 percent.

Income distribution in the Philippines remains beset by inequality. So clear trend in income inequality emerges over the period 1985-2003, either than inequality is high. The Gini coefficient fell slightly from 0.49 in 1997 to 0.47 in 2003, but this still represents a worse income distribution than the 0.45 level observed in 1985, 1988 and 1994. With many people around the bottom of the income distribution, a small change in the way poverty is measured has major implications for the population identified as poor.

Poverty measured using the international poverty line of $1 per day has been falling steadily. In 1990 the proportion of the Philippine population living on less than $1 per day (purchasing power parity (PPP)) was 28.3 percent.

By 2003 this head count had fallen to 11.1 percent. The proportion of the population living on less than $2 per day was a great deal higher, at 44.1 percent in 2003. The international poverty line is sometimes interpreted in the Philippine press (as it is elsewhere) as the income equivalent of $1 per day (back a poverty line would result in a far higher poverty incidence (about 45 percent of the population in 2000). In 2003 the PPP exchange rate for $1 was P41.30; up from P11.80 in 2000 and P9.25 in 1997.

Official poverty lines have not kept pace with inflation. Poverty lines have been worth less and less in real terms over the past 15 years. The poverty line in 1988 was P4,777 per person per year; the equivalent of P14,130 in 2000 (using the Consumer Price Index). The poverty line in 2000 was only P11,605 per person per year. Another important methodology issue is that no basic poverty is likely to be underestimated; official surveys exclude those without official and permanent residences. Many urban poor families live in informal settlements and squatter areas.

The proportion of Filipino families that rate themselves as poor is a great deal higher than the official poverty incidence. Based on a Social Weather Stations (SWS) nationwide survey of subjective poverty, nearly two-thirds of families (61 percent) rated themselves as poor in September 2003. The average subjective poverty threshold indicated by families with five members who felt they were poor was P9,466 per month. In contrast, the official poverty threshold for a family of five for the year 2000 was P9,080 per month. SWS also conducts hunger surveys. In September 2003 the self-rated hunger incidence was 15.7 percent.

Income poverty in the country is a dynamic phenomenon; people move in and out of poverty over time. In an attempt to gauge chronic and transient poverty, *found that over a three-year period about one-fifth of the surveyed households were chronically poor* (e.g., they were poor in each of three observations), *whereas nearly one third of the households moved into and out of poverty during the period.* Transient poverty can be addressed through improved social safety nets that cushion families against temporary shocks. Examples include conditional cash transfers and labor-intensive public works programs.

Poverty is a deprivation of essential assets that include but go beyond income. Access to various assets helps to reduce vulnerability and to keep people out of poverty. Five essential assets are human capital, physical capital, natural capital, financial capital and social capital. Asset poverty is a major problem in the Philippines.

Human Capital. The most important human capital investment in the Philippines are in health and education. *Three main challenges persist in the Philippine education system:* declining participation rates, poor quality of education and low student survival rates. For every 100 children in the Philippines who start Grade 1, only 67 will complete elementary schooling. This rate is even lower for the poor. In ARMM, for every 100 children who start elementary school only 34 finish.

Health challenges in the Philippines include high maternal mortality rates, a very high incidence of tuberculosis—ranked eighth in the world by the World Health Organization—and poor quality and inaccessibility of public health care services. Private health care is prohibitively expensive for the poor and access to it is major issue in a result of urban bias.

Physical Capital. Problems in access to physical capital include water, housing and infrastructure issues. Only 76 percent of the poorest households have access to safe drinking water. Housing for the poor is a major challenge, particularly in urban areas.

Environmental hazards constitute pervasive threats to poverty reduction. For a variety of reasons that include lack of information on assistance programs and how to access them, eligibility requirements that discriminate against the poor, and an emphasis on mortgage finance as the primary form of housing assistance, informal sector investments can impact positively on the welfare of the poor. Social funds can be especially beneficial, providing access to services (such as health and education), improving market access and developing human capital.

Natural Capital. In rural areas, access to land is one of the main determinants of welfare. Land reform beneficiaries have been found to have not only higher incomes and lower poverty incidence than non-beneficiaries, but they also fare better in terms of other indicators. The environments is another important form of natural capital.

Poor environmental conditions adversely affect human capital, growth and distribution of capital. One issue facing the Philippines poverty reduction by lessening in the consequences of environmental damage, finding that the amount of poverty reduction has been overstated.

In the Philippines, forest cover have been reduced to less than one-fifth of total land area, logging, mining and encroachment of settlements to critical watersheds are all to blame. Carbon dioxide emissions are on the rise, and urban air quality in particular is very poor. The rich biodiversity in the Philippines is severely endangered. Conservation International ranks the country as one of the five hottest "hotspots" on the planet, i.e., one of the most threatened areas on earth.

Financial Capital. The poorest are unable to save, so access to credit and insurance becomes important areas of financial capital. Research shows that despite high and growing levels of remittances in the country, the poorest are largely excluded from the benefits of overseas migration. While a significant proportion of families receive income from abroad, it is their main source of income, these families are mainly based in urban areas.

The poorest are largely rural. Families from higher income groups receive a large share of their incomes from abroad than do lower income groups. Internal (rural migration and remittances may actually exacerbate inequality problem in the Philippines.

Social Capital. Social capital comprises the social resources on which people are able to draw, through networks and connectedness and relationships of trust and reciprocity. Social capital is the foundation for informal safety nets among the poor.

One way to foster social capital in the Philippines is to promote increased participation by poor in groups and organizations through membership in local and community organizations. In 2002, 26 percent of families had at least one member involved in a people's or a non-government organization.

Poverty mapping at the local level is a useful tool for determining access poverty and designing relevant interventions. A community-based monitoring system (CBMS) collects relevant, timely and local census poverty indicators. In April 2003 the Department of Interior and Local Government passed a resolution that local government units (LGUs) collect 11 survival, security and socializing indicators on an annual basis.

Based on participatory methods, it facilitates allows for precise targeting of interventions based on knowledge of the specific determinants of access poverty at the household level. Other poverty mapping initiatives have been initiated by the Poverty Reduction Center and the National Statistical Coordination Board.

The major causes of poverty in the Philippines fall into seven broad categories: (1) weak macroeconomic management; (2) employment issues; (3) social exclusion; (4) vulnerability to natural disasters; (5) agricultural sector and an unfinished land reform agenda; (6) governance issues including corruption and a weak state; (7) conflict and security issues, particularly in Mindanao and civil unrest.

Successive governments since 1985 have attached a high priority to poverty reduction, but have had only moderate success in reducing the overall head count and outright failure in reducing the absolute number of poor Filipinos.

Targeting has been a key problem in many areas of budget, governance and LGU capacity (particularly in the context of decentralization, initiated with the 1991 Local Government Code). The budget deficit has denied the government to launch new ones with much new program but resulted in duplication of efforts, wasted resources and a continuous state of transition.

The 2004-2010 Medium Term Philippine Development Plan contains ambitious poverty reduction targets. The stated goal is to reduce the poverty incidence of families from 28.4 percent in 2000 to 17.9 percent in 2010. Similarly, the subsistence incidence of families is to be halved to drop from 11.13 percent in 2000 to 6.1 percent in 2010.

The MTPDP document states that the poverty targets assume a reduction in the population growth rate to an average of 1.93 percent per year for the period 2005-2010. However, it does not articulate a clear population policy.

This country poverty analysis is a call to action. The number of poor people in the Philippines is increasing. Average family incomes are falling despite growth in GDP.

Future poverty reductions will require a broad, multidimensional focus on income and access poverty and on their broad causes.

(This is a condensed version of the ADB report "Poverty in the Philippines: Income, Assets and Access," which the bank released in February.)

Assistant Editor Tony Burgonio

Across the NATION

Mayor says Palawan fish kill caused by planktons

PEEK harvested in Palawan is safe, according to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources regional office, and the fish kill that recently hit three villages in the province's capital was not caused by toxic elements.

The fish kill that hit the villages of Bagong-bayan, Sicsican and Simpocan in Puerto Princesa was caused by the depletion of oxygen, which is initiated still unsafe, by sleeper swarms and mass shores, Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward Hagedorn said yesterday.

In a statement he sent to the bureau to explain the fish kill, Hagedorn said "the conditions created fish and other marine animals living in those areas to suffocate."

"This conclusion is solidly based on dissolved oxygen measurements made by the composite team headed by BFAR," he said.

Readings from a monitoring setup in Barangay Bagong-bayan showed that the dissolved oxygen levels had dropped to 2.88 mg/liter in that area," the mayor said.

Asuncion, he said, "is often caused, not was in this case, by blooms of tiny marine plants."

"Weather factors, such as wind direction and strength, and temperature, play a major role by providing favorable conditions under which blooms can develop and persist," he said.

Tests showed that plankton such as alexandrium and noctiluca were present in the waters during the fish kill.

They color the water red and brown and produce oxygen in the day and take up oxygen from the water in the night, said the mayor.

"This is reflected in daily tests of dissolved oxygen levels, increasing during the day, dropping off during the night and at their lowest in the early morning hours," Hagedorn said.

"Oxygen production drops and phytoplankton begin to die. The decay uses up more oxygen as decomposing bacteria break down the dead phytoplankton. The result can be, as it was here, a very rapid depletion of oxygen," he said, quoting the DF Marine Science Institute report prepared by Rhodora Azanza.

The fish kill was reported on March 11 by the provincial fisheries office of Palawan.

The types of fish found floating in the waters of the three towns included rono, parrotfish, chinese emperor, and rabbit. Moray eels were also seen floating but not in the same numbers as the other fish.

"Reports from local officials and residents said that fish could be seen gulping for air at the surface before they die," said Hagedorn.

"Along the shore, many varied local small associated with hydrogen sulfide being produced by sediment chemistry and bacterial processes."

2 killed in gold robbery

LUCENA CITY—Two persons were killed and three others were seriously wounded after five unidentified bonnet-wearing suspects shot them while robbing a gold refinery plant in Barangay Bulo, Buenavista, Quezon, 250 km south of Manila, late Friday evening.

Insp. Henry Uy Fronda-Inia police station chief, identified the victims as Rodolfo Pascualda and Omelio Panelina, both cashiers of the combined gold refinery plant owned by one Ilex Ltd. and some three labourers from the publication.

Uy said at least five armed suspects barged into the plant premises at around 10 p.m and, without any provocation, fired their guns at everyone inside the plant.

Pascualda and Panelina died from several fatal wounds in different parts of the body.

Seriously wounded in the shooting were Ariel Macaberon, Sergito Dagsaan and Joselito Villagen, the plant chemist, Uy said in a mobile phone interview.

After the shooting, the robbers forced some and ransacked the vault inside the office that contained P13,000, several pieces of jewelry and still undetermined volume of gold.

Police and soldiers tried to pursue the suspects.

Certain areas of Buhi and neighboring villages are hosts to lucrative small-scale mining operations that serve as one of the prime sources of livelihood of majority of the residents. Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

'Lumad' group denounces move to open up Mt. Apo

KIDAPAWAN CITY—A lumad group assailed a recent decision by the government-led Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) to lift the five-year ban on climbing Mt. Apo.

Datu Teodoro Bangcas, chair of the ancestral domain of the Manobo-Apuo Dumalahons Autonomous Community (MADAC), said that as "owners" of Mt. Apo, they were not given importance because they were never consulted before the decision was arrived at.

"The ban to be discussed between and among us—you as representatives of the government and us as rightful owners of Mt. Apo," Bangcas said.

Earlier, PAMB said it was lifting the climate order, which was brought about by the degradation of the country's highest peak.

The order came days ahead of the Holy Week, when thrillseekers throng Mt. Apo as their destination.

Bangcas said they felt insulted and bypassed by the PAMB decision to open our mountain."

"The mountain we still pass by our land... the lands that we consider holy. Our sons, our domain," he said.

Bangcas' group claims at least 3,000 hectares of Mt. Apo, including the villages of Ranwein and Bulalog here and Sinaragan (Bolong and Nituegan in Magpet town under a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title issued by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples on Feb. 14, 2004.

The original Certificate of Title was signed by Senator Dante Liangco, NCIP chair.

"Our ancestral domain and other customary rights and interests should be recognized in the protected area," Bangcas said in reference to the National Indigenous Peoples Rights Act.

"A lot of issues had been created but we are asking the government, including the PAMB, to also respect us before doing things that may affect us," he said.

Bangcas said what PAMB should have done was to secure a Free Prior Informed Consent from them before it lifted the ban.

"The issue has already been resolved," a PAMB official said, adding that Mt. Apo would be opened only from March to April.

The official said the decision was reached after a meeting of the stakeholders in January.

He said that in order for the trails to be opened, the PAMB laid down certain conditions, which included clean-up drives and an assessment of the carrying capacity of the trails and the campsite.

Emelio Libre Jr., Mt. Apo Foundation Incorporated environment director, said it was necessary to determine the carrying capacity of the trails and the campsite to determine the number of people that can be accommodated. Jeffrey M. Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Town execs launch big plans for Hundred Islands

By Yolanda Sarmiento-Fuentes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

ALAMINOS CITY—Officials of this western Pangasinan city want to give the Hundred Islands National Park, the first national park declared by the government in 1940, the recognition it deserves.

Mayor Hermes Braganza said the recent transfer of the management of the HINP from the Philippine Tourism Authority to the city government would pave the way for the city's vision of developing the park into a world-class tourism destination.

"[The vision is to] develop Alaminos as the City of the Hundred Islands [and make] it the center of tourism in North-ern Luzon," Braganza said.

He added that part of his vision was to transform the area into a perfect investment hub, open more job opportunities and at the same time preserve its marine ecosystem.

On Friday, Braganza, PTA general manager Robert Uson Barbers and Environment Secretary Michael Defensor signed a memorandum of agreement on the transfer of management of the HINP.

President Macapagal-Arroyo is set to sign an executive order to formalize the transfer, local officials said.

Braganza said the city wanted to develop the HINP in an environmentally sustainable approach.

A document outlining the city's vision for HINP said Alaminos wanted to promote eco-tourism in the islands in a family-oriented way while preserving and sustaining the park as a tourist resource.

A sad part of the plan was to "establish a zoning plan and a marine sanctuary and to develop a marine institute [in the city] to educate and create awareness [in the environment and the HINP].

Braganza said the transfer of the islands' management was based on Republic Act 9522, which converted Alaminos into a component city of Pangasinan. The law identified the Lucap Bay and Mantar Reserve as within the jurisdiction of the city.

Once the transfer is formalized, the city government will have full control of the awarding and regulation of all activities and concessions in the park, as well as the Lucap Bay and its beaches area, Braganza said.

But he said the HINP will not be the sole responsibility of the city as the PTA and the Department of Tourism will continue to provide support.

The use of the park will be limited to recreation and tourism-related activities, but all revenues and collections generated from its operation will be used solely for its maintenance, operation and development, Braganza said.

MAYOR Hermes Braganza, PTA star Uson Barbers and Environment Secretary Michael Defensor chat on the shore of the Lingayen Gulf after signing a pact on the Hundred Islands.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Power firm told: Give refund to consumers

CALAMBA (Ill 18th) CITY—The Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) ordered the Cagayan de Oro Electric Power and Light Co. (Capelco) to return about P1.28 million in generation charges it allegedly overcollected from consumers.

The ERC's order covered Capelco's July to October 2000 charges.

A copy of the ERC order, which gave the power firm one month to comply, was dated Feb. 20 but the city council, which has been opposing Capelco's high rates, only received the order on Thursday.

Councilor Benjamin Rotaldo, chair of the council's trade and commerce committee, said the ERC decision justified the claims of consumers here for a reduction in Capelco's charges.

Aside from ordering a refund given to its consumers, the ERC also fined the power firm P112,500 for overcollecting generation charges before its previous bi-additional charges had been approved.

Rotaldo said even when its petition was still being heard, Capelco was already charging P2.46 per kilowatt hour (kWh).

The ERC approved rate then was still P1.99 per kWh.

"We are glad that the power consumers here have attained an initial victory with the ERC ruling. This is a seven initial victory for our struggle against power rate increases so the fight is going a long way," Rotaldo told the Inquirer.

The Inquirer tried but failed to get comments from Capelco officials.

However, in an interview with a local television station, Marilyn Chavez, Capelco customer relations officer, said they could not give a refund despite the ERC order.

She said what Capelco can do is to offer discounts to consumers.

"We can only accommodate... the one-time discount for the consumers but we could not give out any refunds," Chavez said in the said interview.

Rotaldo said he learned that Capelco has already refiected the discount in the March bill it sent out to consumers. Bruce C. Allbrook, PDI Mindanao Bureau

INQUIRER Mindanao

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Editor Jun Bandayrel
News Chief Nico A. Alconaba

Disturbing the peace in the zone

VILLAGERS gather in court their demand to free their village of the military

By Jeffrey M. Tupas
Talaingod, North Cotabato

PEOPLE of Alimodian in Tiduman, North Cotabato, call their village "Peace" (reconcile). But the place has nothing to do with construction or luxury equipment. Alimodian is a peace zone.

But what the villagers treasured for 11 years, after Alimodian was declared a peace zone, could be ruled one after all.

"They are afraid that their quiet nights are now over. Recently, they were overwhelmed by anxiety when Army soldiers from the 36th Infantry Battalion came and established a detachment.

Chris Campano, secretary of the 46 families from Dao Tree Council, may be counting too much on the fact that their village is a peace zone, meaning no armed person or group, either from the government and the communist rebel People's Army (NPA), is allowed to enter.

Campano said the presence of the military and its structure, located within the non-kilometer radius of the populated area and designed to intimidate the rebels, constituted grave disruption to the provisions of the peace zone declaration.

"For many long years, we had lived in almost perfect peace. Now, we are afraid that the 23 years of beautiful life will be snatched from us," she said.

Offenses

During the period, only two residents that offended, if not deserved, the declaration happened.

On March 23, 2003, the village chief of Barong was gunned down in Alimodian by suspected NPA assassins. More than a year later, at least 18 soldiers were alleged to have brutally tortured the house of a resident, Jessie Cagnapardo, whose nephew was slain NPA leader Kumander Norberto Campagne said the war party were looking for the rebel, who was buried in her swimming.

"The detachment invites trouble," said Teresita Dura, vice chair of the peace zone council.

"We are afraid of being caught in the crossfire between the government and the rebels," she said, adding that many of the residents were now afraid to go to their farms.

"The possibility of encounters is not remote. We have all the reasons to be afraid as we already had them 11 years ago. Besides, we don't really know what the two groups are thinking ... all we know is that we are afraid and we have all the reasons to be afraid," Dura said.

Dialogue

In a consultation-dialogue with military officials in Alimodian recently, the residents declared their opposition to the military presence.

Lt. Ephrel Tayaban tried to persuade them to agree to the setting up of the detachment, stating the military was the "legitimate protector of the people."

But officials of the barangay council and the detachment were just temporary, but Campano said "they (soldiers) really have to leave the area."

Tayaban said they first constructed the detachment in Sitio Galvan in Tulunan, a neighboring village. The sitio, he said, was marked red, meaning it's an NPA area.

"We moved out because the residents of Alimodian who were having sore failure were no longer willing to their farmland because they were afraid," he said.

The order to build the detachment, Tayaban said, came from Army headquarters in Cotabato to stop the alleged extortion activities in Talaingod by communist rebels.

Boundary issue

Confirmed by the people's opposition, Tayaban agreed to move their post out of the peace zone only if the boundary between Alimodian and Talaingod differed. Both parties agreed to conduct a ground survey to resolve the issue.

And like the others in Talaingod, the Alimodian people were wary deployed when the residents asserted their right to live safely in their own village.

In the 1990s, Alimodian was a lonely district of government soldiers and NPA guerrillas.

"Before we declared this village a peace zone, there was a huge exodus every month and some residents of the other villages fled here for safety ... there were many children and women ... all of us crying," Campano said.

For many years, 320 families from the villages of Tiduman, Campagan and Alimodian stayed in an elementary school in Sitio Bantanol because of the heavy fighting.

But after Dura ended, the three villages were declared peace zones.

"We were already tired of hearing gunfire and running out of fear, so we insisted on declaring this place a peace zone," Campano said.

"We hope that we will be respected ... we just hope," she added.

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An award-winning model for organic farming

By Anthony S. Alesh
Bansalan, Davao del Sur

LORENZO is the town and town of sturdy fruit trees. It is difficult to imagine that not too long ago, this land in Bansalan, Davao del Sur, was once barren and idle.

Today the five-hectare piece of real estate has become a model and testament to the viability of organic farming. Durian, rambutan, mangosteen, soursop, lanzones and other fruit-bearing trees grow abundantly. Contributing to the harvests are the growing stock of farm animals that do not require much tending or elaborate technology to breed.

Six years ago, Leo Integrated Farm in Barangay Darasa, 9 km from the town proper, was a field of coconut trees that did not yield even as much as it should. It had remained unattended for years.

Benjamin Leo, the now tropical ultra-rural officer of the Bureau of Immigration, inherited the property from his parents and slowly turned things around, spending his spare time and weekends there.

Nurturing

Born to parents who owned vast tracts of land in the province, Leo learned early in his childhood how to appreciate farming. The fifth of eight siblings, he says how farmers valued the belief they inherited how one could live comfortably through farming.

After he acquired his parcel, Leo immediately poured all his efforts in to making it productive. By then, he had read a number of books and economic courses on farming.

He was impressed by the 74-hectare demonstration center of the Mindanao Baptist Rural Life Center (MBRLC), popularly known as Mt. Carmel in Bansalan. He made the facility his development model.

The MBRLC, a nonprofit, private development organization with public ventures, has developed the Sloping Agricultural Land Technology (Salt) and six sustainable farming schemes.

It conducts training on community development, extension strategies and techniques, primary health care and moral values.

Model

Among its objectives is research and developing appropriate farming technologies, soybean, grape and livestock that will help farmers increase and sustain production of their land.

For his farm, Leo adopted Salt 1, the Simple Agro-livestock Technology (Salt 1), first farm production, and intensive production (SFIP) measures.

In six years, Leo integrated farm has become a model of hopeless. Aside on, rambutan and mangosteen trees, and close to 100 years of Anglo-his fruit and fruit types raised in a structure made of nipa and bamboo.

Leo's first planted 500 durian trees of different varieties. Interspersed by rambutan, mangosteen, lanzones, passion fruit and peanuts. He works a routine the days on day-operations of the farm.

The dense areas were planted to legumes to control soil erosion and produce organic fertilizer. The plants' leaves serve as food for the goats.

Integrated farming

Roots have become supplementary as the sun breaking per day of the animals as legumes and other grass species are the main food.

Leo started with only eight goats. After three years, the number reached almost 300. He sells 6-9-month-old goats for P4,000 to P5,000 each.

Animal wastes are collected and dried and converted into main feed stores for the farm's learning trees.

Leo said his farm was a classic example of how to protect the environment by using organic substances instead of chemicals. It has received the Gawad Saka Award of the municipal agriculture office and provincial agriculture office for its practice of integrated farming system.

"Conservation across is never a hindrance to engage in other income-generating activities like farming," Leo said.

PLANTING with his raised goats is one of Benjamin's various activities when the visits his "model" farm.

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Application Period: March 28 to May 13, 2005

Lay Catholics read Bible in original Greek, Hebrew

From page A9

But from his, a physician, and Dominic Ashenmy, an accountant, can read the same passages in Hebrew and Greek, respectively.

He can read the Psalms in Biblical Hebrew, the original language the books of the Old Testament were written.

Ashenmy, on the other hand, can read the passages of Christ in Biblical Greek, the most popular language at the time of Jesus.

He and Ashenmy yesterday received their certificates of completion of a two-year program called Pastoral Biblical Studies (PBS) at the Claret Pastoral Bible Center (PBC) in Quezon City.

He studied Hebrew at the PBC, while Ashenmy studied Biblical Greek at the Loyola School of Theology at the Ateneo University.

That there are people like his and Ashenmy taking courses on Bible Studies and Biblical languages indicates a growing interest among lay Catholics (those who do not belong to religious orders or congregations) to study the Bible.

Not just blind faith

"This is an exciting and significant development," said Fr. Almendro Cobito, the director of Claret PBC, a pastoral endeavor of the Claretian Missionaries of the Philippines and its lay partners.

"It's good that there's a renewed interest in the Bible. A lot of people are misinformed and ask a lot of questions about their faith and the Bible," Cobito said.

He said many Catholics are searching on their own. "They are no longer content with just listening to the priest's homily during Mass. I admit it's not really enough. As a priest, I know that I can only say so much in the sermons."

GRADUATION rites with a thanksgiving Mass are held on Saturday for students of the Pastoral Biblical Studies program at the Claret Bible Center, Diliman, Quezon City. MARY LUCERO

For him, the study of the Bible was fascinating.

Fascinating reading

"Reading the scriptures is like looking at a painting. When you study it more, what you know the context of the word, the flow of meaning of the word, the culture, the history, the geography gives a lot of theology, you'll have more depth in your understanding," the nun said.

As a freshman taking PBS, she was introduced to the Old and New Testaments and their overall historical, cultural and theological frameworks.

In her second year, she studied exegetical exercises using selected texts in the Bible.

Exegesis is a tool of scientific study used by Bible scholars which interprets text from its literary and historical context.

For Ashenmy, Biblical exegesis and his knowledge of Greek allowed him to delve deeper into the minds and hearts of the authors.

"Now I can understand why a certain version of the Bible is reported to have over 2,000 errors in translation," he said.

More encouraging!

Michael Lapid, who works in Batangas and drives all the way to Quezon City to attend classes, just finished his first year of PBS.

"It has been very helpful for me. I wanted to know more about God's word and become a better facilitator in my church work," he said.

Lapid, a cousin of Sen. Lito Lapid, is active in the Basic Ecclesiastic Community in his parish in Guagua, Pampanga. He is currently organizing a 114-session Bible study there which he is targeting for 30-50 participants.

It is for lay workers like Lapid that the PBS was conceived in 2001.

Neglect in Bible reading

In 2001, nun after his arrival from Rome where Cobito obtained his masters degree and doctorate in theology at the Angelicum University, he conducted studies and seminars on the Bible among lay workers, parishioners, religious and Christian Living Education teachers.

Cobito made two observations: "The lay workers were not well-informed about the Bible and two, there was no training program for them since there were only a few biblical scholars in the Philippines involved in lay formation."

The lack of information about the Bible among lay workers and catechists reflected what had long been observed about the general Filipino Catholic population: Most do not read the Bible on their own.

Most of them read the Bible at Mass during the Gospel and usually from the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John...the first four books in the New Testament.

Incidentally, it's even not reading, but hearing, as the reading is done by the priest, the celebrant of the Mass.

The reason for this could be cultural. "There is not a reading culture," Cobito said.

More work

The PBC serves as an "institute" for organized formation programs for lay leaders, catechists, religious and Christian Living Education teachers.

In addition to its two-year basic PBS program, the center will soon offer a third year course for the licentiate study of the Bible and a fourth year course on pedagogy on how to impart biblical studies for different levels—from the grassroots to the intellectuals.

There's still a lot of work to be done to improve the state of learning about the Bible in the Philippines.

But this work should not be left to the parish priests, Cobito said.

Hope lies in lay leaders

"Our parishes are big. There are so many people, so many problems that a parish priest has to attend to. We cannot expect them to give attention to formation programs which are crucial and difficult," he said. "Our real hope is in the lay leaders and for them to avail of the opportunities to learn about the Bible."

Silliman U grad wins . . .

Front page 61

who is completing his doctoral studies in Marine Biology, said in a text message to this reporter.

He had returns so far. After all, most of the winners capitalize from Silicon Valley who judged the contest were on the lookout for investments in information technology, communications and biomedicine.

The predominantly Caucasian panel decided the winners based on whether they thought the projects presented during the competition were worth investing in or not.

Industry insiders and academic observers regard the University of San Francisco competition as the premier event for judging tech undergrad ventures.

The judges' more successful teams in commercializing computer and internet firms, including Bill Gates' chair of the board of Intuit; Intel Whitfield, co-founder of Hummer Winblad; Mike McCone, chief operating officer of Pacific Specialty Insurance; The Hall Street Journal and partners Mukta Srivastava, Deputy Editor Anderson, El Dorado Ventures, Dylan Winters, Globespan Capital Partners, George Tenbrocks, go Ventures; Ignacio Sarasola, Public Utilities Regulator, Goodrich Capital; Jim Frank Advisors, CEO Partners; Omar Montoya, Alta Partners, Mayfield Ventures, Sharpvest Ventures, Crescendo Ventures and Delphi Ventures.

"There was a great core problem," Constantinos thought. "Companies are not fond of free fish."

Then he made the fish go to sleep.

158 entries

Constantinos was among 30 semifinalists who competed for the top prizes.

His technology was chosen from more than 150 entries submitted by some 500 universities from 16 countries.

But the key to the top was the same grueling of all, Constantinos recalled.

The first round consisted of making a so-called 60-second "elevator pitch"—such contestants were made to explain his project to the length of time it would take one to receive building in an elevator.

In the second round, six semifinalists were selected to be divided into four groups of two each.

Wake up, fish

In both the second and the fi nal rounds, Constantinos showed the sleeping fish being awakened when placed in a water-filled plastic bag.

"They couldn't believe their eyes!" he said.

Judges marveled at the technology when it was not based on anything currently existing, Constantinos said.

His problem lay in the fact that US venture capitalists were not ready to invest in the technology.

In any case, Constantinos hopes to present the plague he won to President Macapagal-Arroyo after his return to the Philippines next week.

Beating the odds

"I feel very happy and accomplished. Winning against the odds is great!" he said.

With the rules money Constantinos made for small batch of the alumni of the Oriental Negros innovation Awards focus on developing their businesses.

"Garnering the award proves that there is a good prospect for the technology in the United States and throughout the world," said Constantinos, who consulted patent lawyers in the United States after the contest.

Since winning the grand prize in the Oriental Negros Innovation Awards last year, Constantinos had been receiving offers for business partnerships from all over the world. He company, Bohol Marine Technology Supply Inc., has been invited to investment from Negros Oriental, Japan and Australia and is now called the Baby International Group (BIG), a P1-million company.

Experiments paid off

Constantinos accidentally discovered the technology of putting fish to sleep without water in 1987 when, as a young scientist, he experimented on the act to removal of organics in Bolinao.

He kept the technology to himself until he could scientifically repeat it, presenting it as his thesis for his master's degree in Coastal Resources Management at Silliman University in 2000.

Constantinos said his technology had helped Filipino fish traders export live fish to Japan, Taiwan, China and other countries, at a more economical process.

"Many companies use 75% percent of the shipment cost on if fish is eliminated, our fish producers could make a big in the international market," he said.

Boys' rites of passage . . .

Front page 61

eaten alone on Sabado de Gloria (Black Saturday) because seven is a big in traditional beliefs. It would be less bloody than having it done on Good Friday according to Deanna Gonzales, a government social worker and resident of Barangay Culiat.

According to local folklore, Iloil suffered and died on Good Friday and parents wouldn't want the experience replicated during their sons' circumcision.

"Good to always think Black Saturday, so it would be less bloody," Gonzales explained his son's beliefs.

In scribbled Filipino and English, Gonzales shared with the Inquirer his experience during the circumcision of his youngest.

Cleaning procedure

"Early morning of Sabado de Gloria between 6 a.m. and 8 a.m., the boys were prepared by me by taking a bath. Together with their parents, they arrange their circumcision with a man who is respected in doing this," he narrated.

"Circumcision is done in a hygienic area as girls cannot see them. According to our beliefs, if a girl sees the circumcision, the boys' testicles will grow big," he said.

First, the boys undergo a cleaning procedure, or participate in the shaker. Grass leaves are boiled and the lukewarm water is ruled to drain the shaker organ like non-traditional way (antiseptic).

A knife is made in the middle of a white cloth where the male organ is inserted and tied with a piece of cloth.

Leaves of guava, a wild tree, are softened by pinching with the fingers. It is placed on a lit, to soothe it, and then applied on the male organ.

During the actual circumcision, a male relative will hold the boy's head open called kitaha is used to cut the skin of the male organ.

Bathing in the sea

After the circumcision, the boys bathe in the sea. Sidakmon, the mouthpiece, then dries the boy's penis and dried the boys by land from Puerto Princesa City, a famous for its beautiful and pristine beaches.

"It is necessary to circumcised boy to be called to go out from the house in Friday or it is risky and old bolos death that a reader will come out and bite him," Gonzales said.

He said locals believe the male organ would have a better appearance when circumcised in the traditional way compared to having it done in the hospital.

"This is because the skin on the penis is stripped off. The skin is stretched back, so it is still intact, unlike in a hospital where the skin is also cut off," he explained.

After pulled or cutting, the boys are asked to jump in order the bleeding. Some boys throw on grave leaves to them their circumcised and cast in pain. They often their eyes and tears fall out," he added. "Some apply the chewed guava leaves in the wound to speed up healing, which ordinarily takes two weeks."

Palawan Batak urged to have 'lots of babies'

From page 61

Health's commissioned Ligtas Ina campaign.

"So, both control it, in the meantime, in these remote villages," he quipped.

He said the city government, with its social reform agenda, was "doing everything to help save the Batak from extinction."

All other communities outside the Batak settlements are but game for 2000 volunteers of the condom, fill and birth control pill.

'Mom alive with children'

From a population of around 200 in 1996, the Batak have grown to a little more than 600, according to the nongovernment City Tribal Affairs Office, which groups leaders of Palawan's indigenous groups.

"Most, if not all, Batak couples moms are now alive with children, dren, clearly a good sign," CTH head Wilfredo Robinson said.

"Increased by disease and hunger during the past decades, more Batak homes have sprung from forest clearings or along rivers banks, a far cry from the other homes during the 1980s and 1990s," Robinson said. "They have definitely increased in numbers."

He said Batak births had also been supported in Batak communities in Sandoy and Caramay in nearby Roxas town, north of Puerto Princesa.

But the Batak's living conditions are another matter.

"They are still among the poorest of the poor here," Robinson said.

In April 1996, Batak Ingkatan ni Bilad leader Simeonido Bakit, 40, then CTH president, reported the Batak totaled 484 persons.

Malnutrition, other problems

A study conducted during the early 1980s by anthropologist Jesper Gaidina revealed the Batak was in "considerable demographic difficulty."

The late head of the University of the Philippines Cultural Center, the Batak's population pyramid had hollowed in number might decline in the next 20 years.

Because of infectious and other still unknown factors, the actual fertility level of the Batak is lower than the reported natural fertility level," Gaidina said.

Then "suggested that the Batak population is on their declining and perhaps has been declining for some time," he added.

A report by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), which has high mortality and mortality rates among the Batak are bringing them to the brink of extinction."

Merry missions

"While it is true that medical missions have been conducted in Batak areas, their infrequency inconclusive other sources of medical intervention," the report added.

For several years now, the city government has been providing the Batak health services on a regular basis, in addition to seasonal education and food aid.

The Batak has also been beneficiaries of the city government's "Pagtubo Kita" poverty alleviation program, which in 1999 had a budget of around P46 million.

In 1967 and 1998, City Hall allocated P52 million for indigenous groups, like the Batak, as part of its social reform agenda.

For this year, the city government has to make do with only P350,000 for the same program due to austerity measures, according to Bayanon.

Protecting environment

"But that doesn't mean our love for focus on Puerto Princesa's indigenous communities," he said.

This is where the NGO Tagbaliran Foundation, the city government's partners in poverty alleviation and environmental protection programs, comes in, Bayanon said.

The group's objectives include ensuring the movement of environmental laws and strengthening parties that between the city government and communities.

"In the native Palawan dialect of Cuyunin, bulat means home, while the substantive prefix ng means dear. Tagbaliran, therefore, refers to the homecomers of the late respectable the it," Bayanon explained.

Help from UNDP

"Tagbaliran refers to the one who considers his environment as his home, the stewardship of which is entrusted to him by its real owner—God."

The foundation has obtained a 10.2 million funding from the United Nations Development Program for its program to promote tropical forests.

The two-year project currently involves the Batak and Tagbanua families. It aims not only to protect forests but also to design a five-year community development plan.

"Both the Batak and Tagbanuas took part in the setting up of two cooperatives as well as two planting activities," said Christine Dadia, Tagbaliran project officer.

During the past 11 years, more than 1.5 million trees have been planted under City Hall's year-round tree-planting drive.

Cherry blossoms

"We'll also involve indigenous communities in the plantings of Oh Sakpang, Palawan's scarlet cherry blossoms," the mayor said.

Another is Magsaysay said, was the participation of 35 Batak families from Cayanan in a silkworm project funded by the UNDP.

Bagtubo hopes to replicate the project in other Batak settlements.

Most of the Batak make a living by gathering rattan, nipa and wild honey which they sell to lowlanders.

The indigenous group also engages in slash and burn agriculture—the Ilahnga species—as they plant rice, corn, vegetables and fruit trees.

War against malaria

City health officer Dr. Jennifer Hermosura has vowed to help the Batak "win the war against malaria and other forest ailments that have been decimating them."

Hermosura's office has conducted medical and dental missions in the Batak settlements. For the past nine years, too, a group of businessmen has come on some occasions to the Batak villages, distributing mosquito nets, antimalaria pills, assorted medicines, clothes, toys, powdered milk and other household items.

One of Bagtubo's immediate plans is to order a census of the city's Batak population.

"What we have are mostly estimates," he said.

How many really are they?

Different offices gave different population figures.

A 1998 census listed 3,001 members of the Batak living scattered in Palawan but their number has since sharply decreased.

The National Statistics Office here said that in 2000 there were 366 Batak (207 males and 159 females).

The figures for other Palawanon indigenous groups, according to the survey are: Cuyunin, 140,691; Palawanons, 60, 911; Cagayanon, 10,029; Tagbanua, 14,102; Ipanzanon, 11,431; and Calamianon, 3,699.

The Palawan NGO publication Bantalan, however, said that a 1996 report by the then Office for Northern Cultural Communities (ONCC) placed the local Batak population at 13,000—"obviously a typographical error," according to CTH.

Question of survival

The ONCC, which has merged with the Office for Southern Cultural Communities to form the NCIP, has not updated its files.

"We neither have an operational plan nor progress plan for the Batak," said the office's chief, Nemenzo groups (this year). We have this same funding problems," said an NCIP stalwart.

Whatever are the numbers and despite the good news Gaia CTH that the settlements are "seeing elders with children," Kagsiders knows that the Batak "need our help more than ever."

"They cannot survive on their own," he said.

IN THE KNOW

Batak believe men but 1 male

BATAKS is the smallest of Palawan's ethnolinguistic groups.

Of Negrito stock, they are semi-nomads, alternating their residence in the forest and along the rivers. Their territory is hereditary and by surrounding clans.

They live by hunting, fishing and gathering wild fruits, nuts, roots, eggs and insects. Honey and forest products are their most important items.

The Batak people are animists. They believe that good and bad spirits reside in trees, rocks and mountains. To them, a person has five souls, the principal of whom lives in the head.

Polygamy and polyandry are allowed in their society although monogamy is the most common form.

Divorce is allowed among them. The Batak live in the mountainous northern of the municipalities of Bataraza, Tarabanan, Languyan, Estrella, Quezon, Rizal, Magsaysay and Aborlan.

In the native Palawan dialect of Cuyunin, the word Batak means "mountain people." The Tagalog, on the other hand, refer to Batak as "Tau-tauan," from a phrase called "Tinitingi, at the sound and fall of Pacific Pinnacle.

DI LOS SANTOS - STI
COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS, INC.

DLS-STI College of Health Professions, Inc. located at 201 L. Rodriguez Sr. Blvd., Quezon City is now the corporate name of the former De Los Santos (DLS) College (Established in 1971), recognized by the Ministry of Education in 1986). This new name of the school was brought about by the merger of the DLS College with the Systems Technology Institute (STI), a premier provider of quality Information and Communications Technology. The merger was a strategic move on both parties to be globally competitive in the banking, ICT enhanced healthcare learning institution.

DLS-STI as a learning institution is continuously creating and providing an educational environment responsive to the national goals in order to achieve the best for its students and the community it serves.

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Tyson goes for Pacquiao

From page A1

Filipino?—Pacquiao declared like a soldier sailing to war as he headed back to his suite after a hearty dinner at the hotel's grand buffet.

The ceremonies will be disputed online but the clash of ancient pride has given Pacquiao the very rare chance to earn the nagging national spirit and lift his post-controversy to ecstatic heights.

The encounter ends in the first of this magical nine for any Filipino.

And like Morales, a three-time world champion out to regain pride, Pacquiao is coming with overwhelming—yet risky—momentum—on each—in a fight that has all the trappings of an all-time classic.

The 5-foot-7 Morales, 28, will give everything that's left of his legendary strength and skills. The 30-year boxing icon, with only rare losses, has never been stopped in 49 fights.

Nothing less could be expected of the 30-year old Pacquiao who also has but only twice in 39 bouts.

Pacquiao, 5-foot-5 1/2, has the highest knockout record, 28 in 39 fights, compared to Morales, who has 24 in 47 wins.

Pacquiao continued to be the favorite in the sports book windows here despite the in-rush of Mexican money on the eve of the fight that has lent the MGM Grand and its neighboring establishments a frenzied festive mood.

Knockout

Predictably, those who had placed bets on Pacquiao also parked huge events by knockout.

If the bout more held tight after the weigh-in at the Grand downtown yesterday, where Morales had to shed 40 extra pound for 28 minutes before stripping naked to make 130 lbs, Pacquiao would have blown the Mexicans out of the ring.

Pacquiao, who lowered the weigh the earlier at 129 ½ lbs after having hunted like a lean white shipping clerk for only a night, was visibly too mighty said remember for Morales who seem looking like a shrivel-person ready to retract the Great Fujian.

It will, however, be a totally different scenario in the ring today Morales, after he's able to again take full meals, will blow some into a welter weight and light at about 141 lbs.

THE FILIPINO is rocker this high during On Pacquiao-Morales weigh-in.

Offensive flow

Pacquiao himself would come in with necessary poundage and more murder at 134 lbs.

On the whole though, the fight could be decided on who's able to withstand the punches of the other guy and score solid blows in return.

Morales, slightly taller and with a longer reach and better foot work, packs a knock right straight and a jarring uppercut.

Pacquiao is feared for his wholehand offensive, anchored on a lethal left cross and great stamina that could send him clattering punches from hell to hell.

Both fighters are offensive here.

With their sharp, blazing strike, the fight could develop to [illegible]

"We're ready we're gonna have fun," trainer Freddie Roach said after dinner with Pacquiao yesterday.

Will they juxtapower to pre Morales off balance?

"No, no, they expect us to do that, we have other plans, but what I expect is for Morales to come out slowly," Roach said.

2 "The Beauty" Correa fights Dimitri Donatsi, an LA-based 33-spins in one of the undercards. The super-lightweight bout is scheduled for eight rounds.

Betting odds

Last night, a $1.05 bet on Pacquiao was to pay only $100, based on the sportsbook odds.

The infighting in Team Pacquiao, which came out into the open during the pre-fight medical, was momentarily doused as the moment of truth neared.

Pacquiao himself shrugged off as unfounded fears in Manila that he had been tenderoil weak after a couple blood tests the other day.

Praying the rosary

The original fine-day confusion of the rosary inside Pacquiao's suite was extended to us, with the final one today before the fighter's [illegible] for the fight to 8 a.m.

A 10:00-wagon for Morales would yield $120.

Pacquiao has consistently been favored in the betting windows here, but an unit poll of selected boxing experts by the United States gave Morales the nod, 54 to Pacquiao's 51, with one draw.

Mexicans are expected to outnumber Filipinos 4 to 1 at the MGM Garden Arena where Pacquiao trained outpointing aloofly at Mexicali, Juan Manuel Marquez, the IBF/WBA featherweight champion, who escaped with a draw despite going down three times in the first round.

Before that all-revealing draw with Marquez, Pacquiao's mark had risen precipitously following his 11th round destruction of Mexico demolita Barrera, another Mexican, in February 2005.

Dreaming of Morales

Pacquiao, as early as after that epic welcome fiesta, had been forging his headlines to put on Morales.

Pacquiao kept saying he had been dreaming of Morales.

Many boxing experts, including his handlers, did not take Pacquiao seriously.

Even Top Rank boss Bob Arum will be the chief man in the ring, serving as judges are Dave Moretti, Chuck Giampa and Burt Clotts, the same set of judges who called the first Whitey Weight-Hunter Morales' unfortunate bout, among other high profile matches.

PNP security tight . . .

From page A1

in Quiapo in Manila, Cubao and Muntinlupa in Quezon City and Bacoor in Cavite.

"A lot of people go to these places," he said. "They're not necessarily [targets] ... What we are saying is, we are watching these areas because of the density of people there."

Maundy Thursday

According to Razon, the crucial day during the Holy Week will be Maundy Thursday, when the greatest number of people flock to churches.

All churches—and not only Catholic churches—in the metropolis have been manned since the supposed bomb threat. Church workers, including priests and janitors, have been told to be watchful.

"We are not just talking to priests. We are talking to church administrators, organizations under the church, and lay ministries, to help us help in protect churches. Because we can't guard them all," Razon said, adding:

"Even the janitors will be taught to be on the lookout for suspicious [illegible] bags."

He also said talks with the security officers of malls, hotels and restaurants would continue.

The security preparations cover the districts of Metro Manila, where police forces have been put on full alert, Razon said.

He said civil disturbance units in Regions 3 and 4 (Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog) were on standby.

Bus inspections

PNP Director General Avelino Razon has recently personally inspected bus terminals in Cubao, Quezon City.

On top of random patrols, more checkpoints will be put in place, and security officers of possible target areas have been told to be on the watchful, Lomibao said.

"I will be going around establishments so that the [bad guys] will know I'm on the ground, and [they] should also be on the ground," he said.

Security officers of bus lines in Quezon City have been instructed to bar passengers who refuse an inspection of their belongings, said Chief Supt. Wilnario Rodrosas, director of the Eastern Police District.

Asked if a "no inspection, no ride" policy would be strictly enforced this time, Rodrosas said anyone who would resist an inspection and insist on boarding would be detained.

"The bus conductors will not allow them to board the bus," he said. "The security guards of the bus terminals will do the inspection. We will be there to assist them in case somebody resists an inspection."

The PNP is not discounting the possibility of attacks on tourist spots, although intelligence reports say "key shrine" are the likely targets.

"The information we have is that Metro Manila and key cities in Mindanao [are the targets]. But we should not leave out other areas," Lomibao said, adding:

"The [hundred] might say 'look, they're tightly guarding Metro Manila. Let's bomb Cebu[or in the] Visayas or Luzon areas]."

Public vigilance

But more than the security measures, public vigilance is crucial in preventing the supposed bomb plot from succeeding, Lomibao said.

"Vigilance is still the key," he said at the Baguhan sa Bulan forum, during instances where a bomb attack was thwarted because of an observant citizen.

For example, he said, a few months ago the driver of a Fuso found the carried an unattended backpack in his vehicle and called the attention of the police. The bag supposedly contained an improvised explosive device made of TNT.

"We lack policemen. We need the help of civilians. On local governments, and the media to tell people what to do," Lomibao said. He said the people themselves should be wary of suspicious-looking persons and bags "because there are not enough policemen [to check them all]."

"If [the people] are very, very vigilant, it would be of great help[even," he added.

Live normally

Meanwhile, Ermita advised the people to be alert for possible terror attacks this Holy Week, but said they should carry on with their usual activities.

"Let us live normal lives but be ever watchful and vigilant and ready to cooperate with authorities so that security measures are always acutely observed," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in the wake of the PNP warning issued Friday that the alleged bomb plot of the Abu Sayyaf was real.

Instead of the police's first group in the security situation, Bunye cited the need of suspected terrorists and the identification of a group supposedly engaged in a bombing mission.

"This is a clear signal that the authorities are on top of the situation," he said in a statement.

Lomibao named on Friday seven suspected Abu Sayyaf members supposedly planning bomb attacks this week on churches and other populated areas like shopping malls, public markets, parking lots and bus terminals.

But Ermita also said on Friday that the supposed bomb plot was as yet unverified. Still, he said, additional security measures had been put in place.

Race against time

Lomibao reminded reporters at the forum that Holy Week was at hand and that the PNP had not downgraded its alert status since the Valentine's Day bombings.

Asked whether catching the seven supposed bombers had become a race against time, he said: "Yes, of course."

He also said the success of the supposed bomb plot depended on the measures put in place. "If [the bombers] feel that our security measures are adequate, they may back out. Prevention is best."

But more important, he said, was the vigilance of the citizenry.

Lomibao took pains to explain that the PNP was not trying to stir panic.

"On the other hand, if we do not inform our people [about the] threat and something happens, they will accuse us again of intelligence failure," he said. "What we are trying to do is inform the public so that they will know what to do and how to react [to both attacks] or prevent it."

But Lomibao advised the people against being "overwhelmed by the information."

"Let us go out. Let us perform our normal duties, and with God's blessings, with the Lord surrounding all of us, again human nothing unexpected [perhaps nothing will happen]," he said.

'Original target'

Hundreds of thousands of Filipinos are expected to flock to the provinces during Holy Week.

Baguio City, the Philippines' premier summer capital, was the "original target" of the supposed bomb plot, according to Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

"Baguio was a target long ago," Gonzalez told reporters on Friday, adding that the Department of Security Council chose not to make the announcement so as not to cause public alarm.

But a watch is being maintained in Baguio and in churches in other areas because it is likely that the Abu Sayyaf will pick targets with large crowds of people, Gonzalez said.

He added: "I don't think any place is absolutely safe ... What is important is to avoid [going to] crowded areas."

Gonzalez also said he had yet his men on alert "day and night" during Holy Week.

He said precautions with the National Anti-Crime Task Force, the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Administration, as well as lawyers from the Public Attorney's Office, were on standby for inquests in case arrests were made. With reports from Gil Cabacungan, Jr. and Armando N. Nocum

Sunday BIZ

E-mail us at business@inquirer.com.ph

Business Features Editor Margie Quiroga-Espino

'It's time for Filipinos to make money'

Local students beat American counterparts with better business plans

By Margie Quiroga-Espino

THE WINNERS Team UST Entrepreneurial Mid Corazon Dean Danny Cabalay (Richard Mora, Shanna Chabat, Prof. Gerald Villar, Beatriz Marte with Joey Concepcion (not from left)

"IT'S time for Filipinos to make money," states newly appointed Presidential Consultant on Entrepreneurship and BPM Gang president Joey Concepcion III.

Said the smart but brave mestizo to his children, albeit they (boys) really need to make money.

Concepcion, whose first foray into entrepreneurship was as a high school student selling story dipositos, says he gives limited allowances to his kids when they are in the US and the enterprising youngsters set up lemonade stands to raise a few extra bucks.

Or have mini-fruit spas in their beach house in Batangas serving friends and relatives.

Concepcion's rally is backed by some good news. Two groups of emerging Filipino entrepreneurs gained prominence across the United States early this month, making some of the best business ideas from around the world during two business plan competitions hosted by prestigious US schools.

Alternative boards

At the 21st annual Battle of the Business Plans last March 3 at Harvard Business School in Massachusetts, an undergraduate team from the Eastern University bagged two of seven major prizes at stake. The FEU team—represented by students Dennis Chabat and Richard Mora and advised by FEU business school Dean Espy Cabalay and marketing professor Gerald Villar—presented a business plan for manufacturing alternative watercarrier boards out of recycled aluminum packaging materials. Through a compelling presentation, teamwork and a strong defense, the team earned the judges' nod for the "Move Liberty to Have a Global Impact Award" sponsored by Microsoft, and tied with a US team for the "People's Choice Award" sponsored by Nokia Ventures.

Breakthrough technology

One week later across the US mainland, Gilleran University graduate student Beatriz Cervantes grabbed the best entrepreneurial business plan award over 700 contestants from 33 countries at the University of San Francisco business plan competition. Cervantes impressed a panel of billion-dollar venture capitalists with his breakthrough technology enabling live fish to be transported without water for a day.

These outstanding feats were recognized by Concepcion upon the teams' arrival last week. "We hope the victory of the Filipino teams will drive more aspiring entrepreneurs in the Philippines to work on their business ideas and transform them into actual businesses," he says.

Concepcion is currently building talks with various sectors to draw up a game plan that would encourage entrepreneurship among Filipinos.

He quotes author Francisco Colayco, who says there are two types of entrepreneurs—active and passive.

"Passive entrepreneurs are those who are investors by adding a silencer to their uncle and letting the relative run it but they get a percentage. Active are those who are businessmen."

Redefining entrepreneurship

As a passionate motivator, Concepcion wants to be able to provide Philippine SMEs from college industries to world-class institutions.

"We have to go beyond college graduates," he says in an interview with Sandiganbayan. "Other countries put a lot of emphasis on entrepreneurship."

Concepcion adds there are actually already a lot of agencies promoting entrepreneurship. "I would like to gather everyone in one room and come up with an advocacy on the kind of entrepreneurial spirit we Filipinos can promote.

"We also have to improve the quality of our entrepreneurs. We all can be world-class or Philippine-class," he says, citing the hundreds of thousands of call-out stores in the country. However, he points out these contribute a service for passive investors such as overseas Filipino workers who set up businesses that would earn revenues for their families while they are away.

Concepcion would also like to also create a mandate for the different entrepreneurial schools to create a blue-ribbon institute.

He adds entrepreneurs are optimistic people. "In fact a successful entrepreneur you have to be optimistic."

All four Philippine teams in the Harvard summit, dubbed "Entrepreneurial Idol," made it into the semifinal round.

Further, entrepreneurs are not discouraged by bureaucracy and other deterrents to business. "Entrepreneurs live with the system. They do their best to control government shortcomings. That's what differentiates an entrepreneur—they are not easily discouraged."

Winning students

The winning FEU students presented their technology as a viable solution to the massive global housing backlog that was further worsened by recent natural calamities. The three other Philippine entries were from University of the Philippines (low cost medical devices) in the collegiate category and the young professional teams of Ateneo Manila (upscale designer shoes) and Institute for Corporate Culture Communication & Leadership or ICCCL (call center training services). They competed

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Tales of uncommon courage behind business headlines

"Out of the Lions' Den"
By Rebecca E. Bruce Jr.
Nine Day Publishers, 2005

By Dante M. Ndaco
Contributor

EXECUTIVE READ

ABUSINESS STYLE columnist this side of the world once said he seems to be reading of different countries when he reads the financial news section, on one hand, and the business section, on the other. The latest department portrays a country marked by chaos, punctuated by excesses, a nation out of control. The business page, on the other hand, suggests an image of a country characterized by corporate order, driven by rationality and a controlled environment.

The news pages teem with headline-hogging stories of between crises, paralyzing strikes, are mosquitoes, heroic acts, audacious entertainment news, shocking celebrities, and all other tales that keep the reader on his toes, wide awake or running scared.

In contrast, the business section report corporate events (no less dramatic, if I may add) like well-executed mergers, hostile acquisitions, evergreen issues of profit, life-conscious shareholder issues. These stories are written according to the "discipline" of business, with stopping-well-motivated bland language and studied understatement.

What do the former is that individual stories of gaping, intrigue, and conflict, less also bush stories of quiet heroism and unassuming courage. This is especially true when regulators stand their ground to keep an industry on an even keel, amidst a brewing storm of protests by industry players or a gathering gale of pressure from above and downstairs.

This is what the book, "Out of the Lions' Den," revealed about the small and proper corporate world. The book is authored by former Securities and Exchange Commission Chair Perfecto R. Yasay Jr., the same official who figured prominently in accounts of his ouster in addition with—and subsequent testimony against—then President Joseph Estrada.

You may read in the business pages about the rehabilitation of the Philippine Airlines, the acquisition of embattled PLDT shares by a Hong Kong-based company, the suspicious rise of the stock prices of an undercapitalized firm, the resignation of the executives of the Philippine Stock Exchange, etc.

What you won't read—and what this book reveals for the first time—are the natural negotiation efforts at save an airline, the thought-provoking conflicts over which are less than the highest ethical of the land, the relentless pressures from the fiduca—and, yes, the courage (bordering on heroic on occasion) of Yasay.

Recalling a threat from a former President, the author recounts, "I was not overwhelmed but felt deeply disturbed, fully aware that the publicity was forming the flames of conflict and providing possible physical harm against me. And yet the media coverage was also my best protection."

It isn't easy that courage in the absence of fear, then Commissioner Yasay reveals in this book. Yasay reveals the human side of a man worried about the safety of wife and daughter, and yet showing the strength as a corporate gladiator.

The book, to pick up a phrase used by former Senate President Jovito R. Salonga before the Senate blue ribbon committee, is a "gripping eyewitness account" of the events that began when Ate Yasay said no to the President, that moved on through the impeachment proceedings—and then found its fitting denouement in Erap's then mercifully ended (for three) regime of Fiesta's successor.

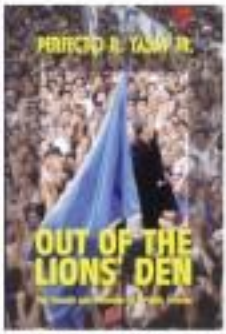
The book is more than a spectator's story. It is a saga of a storyteller participant, thrown into the arena, getting some bruises as he gets swords, stumbling but rising again—for courage, wiser and braver—prepared for a shattering defeat but, somehow, seeing in his vanity the unbearing sense of triumph.

It is also a heartwarming story of one, with an unlimited business to deal with; one who, after four years, decided as to visit what he calls "the corporate pain of retiring (or flying experience)." Does he want to come to terms with himself? Is he making sense of those dizzying developments and confronting pressures—as, with hindsight, he can provide perspective?

Or maybe, we should take his word for it, when he says: "I believe that unless we let's lessons learn—no matter how painful or experience, we can never be liberated from our ignorance and wretchedness."

There are actually a number of ways to read the Yasay book. One, you can note the corporate events, and then get an inside track with Yasay "telling it like it is." Two, you can follow the "sketch events" of the three—each with him when he wins and there his anger when the bad boys and girls misbehave. Three, place yourself in the shoes of the author, feel the slings and arrows that his way, be torn between the horns of a dilemma—one, keep your job and lose your soul; or, two, resign your post and so keep your soul safe from the grasp of Erap.

Then, immerse yourself in this real-life morality play and learn how it feels to be Yasay. We may stumble upon this truth, quoting Yasay: "You can only spend your ground when you fall on your knees." (dante.ndaco@manilastandardtoday.com)



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'It's time for Filipinos to make money

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CONCEPCION: Entrepreneurship must be nurtured

Boston after topping the Philippine Battle of the Business Plans Contest held last Jan. 11 in Manila. CEO-P's inaugural business plan competition required contestants to focus on business plans serving a global market, and these were 30 entries from local undergrads, graduate students and professionals. 1922's Board's Tech team bagged first place in the undergrad category, followed by CB's MedLabs team in second place. MedLabs' promising business plan centered on the design and manufacture of low-cost, high quality medical instruments for developing countries and emerging markets. The MedLabs team was represented by John Glenn Ilagan, Ramon Bernal and Elise Que, and advised by Professor Clemente Borja of UP Diliman's School of Engineering.

In the professional category, Toronto Manila, which has already started, is a globally-focused shoe design and manufacturing business with ambitions to rival designer shoes made in Italy and Brazil. The team was represented by award-winning designer Brian Toronto, together with Raquel Jocson and Vanessa Arriola. The RCCG Students' plan focused on providing training services to quickly bridge the gap between the 40,000 Filipino call center applicants that annually pass the rigorous call center exams, and the industry-demand for 140,000 call center service agents. The RCCG Team was represented by Melissa Nicole Ricafrente, Angeli Landrebe, Paul Lucero, and Joseph Sia Ang.

GCS-Philippines will hold the second battle of the Business Plans this June. Last January's GCS-P contest was sponsored by Oxbiz, the Entrepreneurship Club of Harvard Business School, and 65 locals, the global network of students and alumni of Harvard Business School and from 28 of the world's leading MBA programs.

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Ex-rebels face another war: Fight for economic survival

By Emma ruth Gabriel
Contributor

IN THE upland regions of Tawi-Tawi former Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) combatants are laying down their arms to face another form of warfare—a race for economic survival. This time around, instead of bullets, former MNLF combatants are farming in an investment against poverty.

Upland farmers in Languyan, municipality of Panglima Sugala, Tawi-Tawi were formerly involved in the revolutionary struggle against the government. After signing the peace agreement, they went back to what they were born to do—till the soil and hope life gives them a chance to live.

But it is not easy. Their P1,500 monthly income from tilling the soil cannot even cover basic needs like feeding their families or provide, at the very least, decent housing and educational opportunities for their children.

No matter how hard they tilled their 2,500-square meter farm of vegetables and fruit trees, they could not increase their farm's yield due to limited farming implements and an outdated marketing technique.

For them not to go back to carrying guns, something must be done. An intervention would be most opportune now. They stand on a precipice. If the ex-combatants lose hope and falter, they may take to carrying guns or worse, banditry as a career.

"Peace is still the best solution for Mindanao," hopes Eddie Alih. "With lives hanging in the frail balance, the entry of New Zealand was the light at the end of their tunnel.

Last year, The New Zealand government funded a farm economic program where P6 million was pledged to be production, marketing and organizational support for the ex-MNLF combatants.

"The project is designed to re-channel the energies of the former rebels from the armed posture to that of a conservative position. Training and technology transfer through timely assistance become instrumental in instilling their self-worth and esteem," explains Alih.

A one-hectare model farm was then established not too far away from the Command's camp in the uplands of Tawi-Tawi. There, the ex-MNLF combatants turned farmer-entrepreneurs were taught varied farm technologies and integrated farming systems.

The model farm showed them that more could be grown on the same size of land when integrated farming is applied. The crops were sold locally and the income generated were once again pooled by the community and used as a revolving fund for farm operations.

The 500 pieces of squash recently harvested was proof that the model worked. The ex-MNLF combatants have active planting and harvesting committees and have guards down pat. Their menu of vegetables reads like a salad item with bitaka, ajonjo gourd, bitter gourd and watermelons as primary products soon being sold to markets.

Apart from the farming technology they learned, the ex-MNLF combatants can easily talk on organic soil poisons, financial analysis systems, crop disease prevention, financial control and Total management. They now canvass for the best price quotation from different suppliers before purchasing farm equipment.

"I is just scratching at the edge of a very desperate problem," admits Ambassador Suh ex. Although the New Zealand government is doing their share of assistance, they know that there are too many ex-combatants to allow entry to the central government level. "I'm just there because we are genuinely interested about the plight of marginalized people," adds Ambassador Suhet.

"We have to be able to change people's attitudes towards development and we should not treat them as one project deals," stresses Alih. Filipinos are perceived to be dole out hounds in terms of foreign grant and donations. Alih continues this misconception by proving the ex-MNLF combatants are well worth the risk.

After all, it has been some time since the ex-MNLF combatants rebelled. One main reason for them going down from the uplands of Tawi-Tawi would be to get their farm products to market.

FORMER MNLF combatants talk about winning the war against poverty

MNLF Commander Jibal Hamisal (left) and Eddie Alih, chancellor of the Mindanao State University in Tawi-Tawi

TAWI-TAWI farmer tries to make the most of his land

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Backpack maker has yet to slip one on

By Sonnet Ebanen

AFTER 18 years of outfitting mountaineers with outdoor gear, Montanaro Sports Gear owner Eduardo Aquino, 52, has yet to slip on his backpack.

He says his busy schedule always got in the way.

"Much as I wanted to join a climb, paper work and other customers held me back. Add to that my fear of heights," says Eduardo, who considers his regular visits to their marketing office on the third floor of their Mandaluyong building as his way to "bring Baao therapeutic."

"Talking with my people makes me feel good. Learning about their concerns would help the business a lot," says Eduardo.

He saw the emerging potential of outdoor gear back in the late '80s and early '90s when more mountaineers had to convert themselves with school type backpacks.

He had also gone through tough times, but his determination made the difference when he put up Aquino Industry.

In the early '80s, he lost his job after the automobile company he was working for closed shop.

"The economy was in shambles back then. Massive layoffs were the norm. I had no choice but to weather the crisis," says Eduardo.

He saved his P8,000 separation pay to buy 24 sewing machines, thus setting the foundation from his unsecure situation and he served options for a chicken slaughterhouse and canteen.

The determined Eduardo took up a sewing course to begin the business he believed built as much promise.

In 1989, Aquino Industry emerged as Eduardo entered into bag and sell. He would buy flotsam scrap synthetic materials to make school bags, mail bags, folders and even purses in their backyard factory in Mandaluyong, Quezon City. The items were distributed to National Bookstore and several retailers in Baclaran.

"Demand had a strict consignment requirement; good thing the quality of my products spoke for themselves," says Eduardo.

The turning point came when Eduardo's mountaineer nephew suggested an outdoor gear business. Eduardo's nephew did the backpack design with extensive research, and subsisted in weight capacity. Eduardo supplied the materials.

Soon after, the first 40-liter weight backpack would find its way to the back of his nephew.

Eduardo decided to form an other company under Aquino Industry after getting requests from mountaineers and enthusiasts.

A friend, Bristol suggested the Swiss word Montanaro, which means mountain boys. His friend also designed the logo. In 1998, Montanaro Sports Gear became the business name.

Eduardo later added sandals and accessories such as organizers, dunkbags, shoulder wallets, trash bags, solar fibre and shopping bags to Montanaro's product line.

In 1999, administrative/marketing officer Geraldo Bautista decided to offer the products first to Tony's, knowing no crack.

"We were proud to claim that the Montanaro bags on level first as Tony's founders and have continued to enjoy brisk sales," says Bautista.

Next registered the biggest sales to date and locals then own ran a joke "Kung hindi Montanaro ang sot mong sundalo, wa-responsibility ka If you don't wear a pair of Montanaro sandals, you would be charged with juvenile-ing."

Bautista believes that effective marketing involves approaching the media.

"We accompanied and trained the Bhagsakang Club Bayan mountaineers when they climbed Mt. Apo, plus the correspondents' staff on their way to Palawan. Most of them were outfitted with Montanaro gear," says Bautista.

Danger seemed unavoidable, the group would later find out.

"We climbed Mt. Talamitan in Nueva Ecija, alongside Manila employees. Along the way we encountered armed rebel who tried to extort money from the group. We came to the point of calling our 400-ON friends. Fortunately, nothing bad happened to us," says Bautista.

After several treks with ABS-CBN, most of its employees became regular customers including entertainers who order specially designed camera jacket.

To maintain the competitive edge, Montanaro continues to create different backpack models.

"We made the first backpack having a back body bum, abdominal frames, an 8-liter bottom and a built-in cover. The bag undergoes five tedious intensive in reliability," says Eduardo.

He added that the company's membership in the Philippine Franchising and Retailers Association is part of a long-term plan to get a bigger share of the market.

"Becoming a member enables us to get recognized by big business organizations, especially during conventions where they gather," says Bautista.

Montanaro proudly claims to be the first organization to reach a mountaineering convention by team building seminars, fatherhood classes, include Antikes Assam, Odyssey, Tahiy's and Mayuk.

Polly Peliciano, Montanaro's marketing expert, teaches backpacking (how to pack items), setting up of tents (how to spot an ideal area), knotting, reading trail signs and basic and first aid/mountain technique. The mountaineering staff also has a Bontian service team members.

The current Montanaro product line will fall into high gear.

"Mountaineers are expected to come in droves, so we would add more designs to our existing 11 backpack models," says Eduardo.

With the way things are going, Eduardo surely is at the top of his game.

EDUARDO (left) and Geraldo pass the mop for mountaineers and outdoor enthusiasts to have quality gear.

Singer launches new showroom

PROFESSIONAL On Ayala Center Mall is Singer Marketing Inc., an authorized dealer of world famous Singer sewing machines for over three decades. The business was started by former Singer Philippines executive Sergio S. Gonzalez in 1960, who was chosen as one of the company's first few authorized dealers in the country.

He happily recalls this memorable opportunity: "By 1965, Singer was manufactured by line to go into dealer operations as capital operating costs always, and I was very lucky to have this place as my cut let. I was chosen as one of the dealers. This has been an ongoing center of Singer before, since around 1966."

His daughter, Edith Gonzalez-Bernal, took over the reins in 1990 and has continuously worked hard in making Singer's products and services more accessible to buyers. The dividends of consistent effort and dedication have paid off, and Edith reveals that this led to a boost in relationship with Singer.

"A lot of people know about the shop already; this is an image that's been here for thirty years. We've boomed, the old store was closed so for the first one to be renovated and given a showroom. The Singer people came over and talked to me about putting it up.

"The timing was totally right. They saw that there's a lot of walking traffic here."

The Sergio Singer showroom was

(CONTINUED ON B2)

RP needs to discover its treasure of organic goods

By Amy R. Remo

ORGANIC products can combat disease and give you a healthier body, more radiant skin and lustrous hair. At least that's what the lists of organic products claim.

But while health buffs worldwide are all abuzz about these miraculous wonders, a lot of Filipinos remain skeptical.

It's ironic as the Philippines, with its rich natural resources, has a huge capacity to produce organic products such as virgin coconut oil, aromatic vinegar and coffee abaca from palm sweet.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a small market for these products in the country. Thus, very few farmers engage in organic farming.

According to Gil U. Juan, director of Filipro Foundation Corp., not too many Filipinos realize that we can reduce the organic value-added niche in the international markets.

"Organic farming not only plays a role in poverty alleviation as it encourages our farmers to continue tilling lands, but it can also protect their health from harmful pesticides," says Juan.

Add the fact that organic products are not only beneficial to one's health, but it is also environment friendly.

Organic products are grown without the use of chemicals like artificial pesticides, fungicides, inorganic fertilizers and hormonal sprays extracted from plants are used.

Slow Response

Filipinos, however, are a little slow in the uptake when it comes to organic products.

Jing C. Ivarra, owner of Manila Herbal & Essential Oils Co., says she feels this on sale as well.

"From the time we launched Tierra Virgin Coconut Oil in 2002, there has been a very very slow response from Filipinos. Most of them are dubious and hesitant to try our products," says Jing.

"The biggest problem among Filipinos is, 'Are we willing the cash?' Some are still not ready to accept these products," adds Jing.

Although it was not the first to produce it, Manila Herbal is said to be the first to push virgin coconut oil in the food market through the First National Conference on Virgin Coconut Oil in 2000 at SMX Convention Center.

Aside from its bestseller virgin coconut oil, Manila Herbal also produces coconut dietary fiber powder the branch Fiber Jym and Virgin Coconut Heart, hair care products and essential oils such as citronella, patchouli, ylang-ylang and lemon grass. It even has Rum Oil, an organic insect repellant.

Although Manila Herbal can produce as much as 150,000 ml of virgin coconut oil in a month, it only produces a little more than 30,000 liters due to low local demand.

To date, Manila Herbal sources out bulk orders, supplying to supermarkets, spas, health clinics and institutional buyers, as well as offshores (traditional traders)—one of Manila Herbal's biggest clients, according to Jing.

She has not, however, delved into exporting.

"I want to push these products in the Philippine market—there is a selling aim. We should be the first ones to benefit from them," explains Jing.

She says that starting last year, there has been a slow steady increase in the patronage of organic products. A lot of write-ups had been made as well about the benefits of organic products, mainly the virgin coconut oil, and thus, winning over many Filipinos.

"Many are starting to pick up hobbies but the Philippine market is still young compared to other countries," says Jing.

Lack of exposure

For Ric C. Ibarra, manager of Ibara Central Inc. which produces the famed Aswagga Organic Vinegar and Coffee Mantil, another problem is lack of exposure and information dissemination.

"Some of these are fault new products, a complete marketing and advertising package should do the trick.

"The problem is, we don't have a budget for marketing and advertising like big multinational companies," says Ric.

He adds that his first attempts to put their products on supermarket shelves did not go as well as it did when the exported organic vinegar to the US and Asian and European countries. Study needed it, in fact.

For local growers like Jing and Ric, they have to rely on word of mouth for their products—at least here in the Philippines.

Making waves abroad

Worldwide though, Ric and Jing's products have been making waves in international trade and food fairs, as well as in the United States, Japan and European countries.

Just last October 2004, Ibara Central's Organic Aswagga Vinegar was recognized in the Anuga Fine Food fair, one of the most important trade fairs for the world of food and beverages. It's a biennial event held in Cologne, Germany.

Aswagga vinegar was recognized in the "Taste Gets There" corner in Fine Food category—one from 100 products that were chosen from among 6,000 products submitted from different parts of the world.

To date, Ibara Central produces about 4,000 liters of Aswagga Vinegar a month but "We says they plan to increase their production soon.

Ibara Central Inc., the company that developed the world's first and only sugar palm vinegar also produces sugar palm syrup and coffee abaca from palm sweet.

Although it has manufactured it not only in October 2000, Coffee Mantil took the international market by storm and can now be considered as par with the famed Kopiluwak, the Indonesian civet coffee. It has also been featured by CNN and The National Geographic.

Coffee Mantil comes from the poop of endangered Palawan civets, which eats sweet cherry coffee.

A "middleman" collects these poops, which Ibara Central would buy and process into coffee. The company, of course, has ways to check the authenticity of the poops sold to them. One assurance: one pellet is made up 20 kilos of coffee.

To date, Coffee Mantil sells for P6,000 a kilo and is available at Bag of Beans for still limited stock.

VIC REYES with some of Ibara Central's bestsellers—Coffee Mantil and Aswagga vinegar

Government efforts

Seeing the huge potential of organic farming, the Export for International Trade Administration and Missions has been fully supporting organic farmers and growers with their endeavors.

Given estimates the country's earnings from organic and niche product exports to grow less by $450 million this year, from $45.7 million to the first 10 months of 2004.

Last year, exports of organic products included mascovado sugar, green mangoes (unripen), banana chips, coconut cooking oil, dessicated coconut, coconut chips, virgin coconut oil and dried Antolia leaves. Major export destinations were Japan, Europe, United States, Canada, Singapore, Australia, Korea and China.

"We hope that more producers would shift to organic farming," says Gwen executive director Isabina Agunod-De Borjen. "We also urge existing organic food producers to get into the export business because there is a huge, untapped market for their products both here and abroad."

Gwen says the government growing awareness on healthier eating habits, food safety and effects of the dangers on genetically modified organisms nurtured the growing demand for organic food.

Add to this, Gwen is optimistic that local organic growers can corner a big-

LOCALLY-PRODUCED organic products have been making huge waves in the international market—but not as much in their own country.

ger chunk of the $25 billion-a-year global market for organics, which is expected to grow to $100 billion in 2006.

Unfortunately, of the 11.8 million hectares of agricultural lands, only 6,650 per cent is devoted to organic farming. Gwen hopes this will increase by at least one percent in 2005.

ARENIGGA vinegar has earned one of the most coveted recognitions from Germany's Anuga Fine Food fair.

Other organizations and agencies have also noticed the potential of and have taken interest in organic farming.

Last year, agricultural credit provider Quedan and Rural Credit Guarantee Corp. and the Philippine Development Assistance Program Inc. launched Credit Window Program, which is aimed at providing regular credit and other support mechanisms to improve organic-based farmers' productivity.

The program also aims to enable shifting to organic farming easier for farmers.

Aside from building local markets, the government's agenda for the sector includes shifting to organic agricultural practices, strengthening the certification of organic products, sustaining the local and international market, and increasing areas of plantation.

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CHIT Juan

Three lively ventures that bank on sleep

By Emmanuel Gabriel
Contributor

COCOONING means retreating to a sanctuary where you can bring the pace of life down a notch and reconnect with the familiar.

The rest of "cocooning," a dominant lifestyle trend in the 80s is experiencing a major comeback. American trend gurus have forecast this predicted the oncoming lifestyle in the late '70s. In the '80s, marketers and advertisers cashed in on the continuing trend of baby boomers nesting. The '90s, global consumer psyches devoted self, well-appointed and cozy homes. They purchased products to enhance the comforts of their generous cocoons.

Now stores caught on and this lifestyle store was born.

Creative entrepreneurs on the other hand, won't rest with boosting funds and get feel for their market to produce nesting-conscious products.

Living in your PJs

Say 'Whaaa' and Dunia started producing 100 percent cotton sleepwear for moms and children 11 years ago. "That time we went all busy with our jobs... nice was in real estate developments, you were with Philippine airlines and I was with ABS-CBN," recounts Whaya in an e-mail message. Despite their hectoral lives and careers, the partners conceptualized and dreamt of making "Natasha," their initial venture into sleepwear a reality.

The four partners contributed P1,000 each as initial capital for Amadeo. "It was an adventure for us to get involved with every step of the way from purchasing materials, drawing up designs, choosing the prominent (and unbecoming)" and quality packaging with meaning, spearheading buyers and stores. Today all partners are married with children... I met the business with my remaining partner who knows everything to me," writes Whaya.

Selling to small boutiques initially, Amadeo produces eight or so and soon the partners found themselves exporting. "One of our first buyers was the US department store Bonbonnie," says Whaya.

Amadeo sleepwear is distinctively bold together by French textile (Aubi pinaki). Known in Catona and Retail stock together the Fashion Art comes fabric to sleepwear you can live in." All the employees are women and they are the bread winners of their families. I am very proud of them," Bonnie appreciates their choice and Lamb designs. Making high quality cotton sleepwear was a good call since most mothers here are actually pole scene fabrics.

Priced on the wholesale rack, Whaya's products are sold to high-end retail boutiques and hotels in the city. Amadeo products currently make the luxury stands in the American women's Club Bazaar at the World trade Center and the Intl Bazaar at the Fort.

Across Chit-Chit Interiors produced a CD of lullabies.

Culled from her travels to the flung outposts in the country and heritage parliament with the help of her supportive village of Friends," Hoop! A Collection of Philippine Lullabies" was given life and Bonnie.

Rocking the cradle

"Wanting life into trust means unleashing on an expedition that caused new more years of research and production, gathering more than 30 lullabies in over 3 dozen vernaculars," relies Chit-Chit.

She chose lullabies because "it is a heart song, a lullaby from Pretty."

A tabled journal of the road trip she wrote were enough to include in the album. The parting gave that Nonetheless of the cost of producing Hoop! made it possible for the journey to happen.

The risk of preserving indigenous lullabies paid off. Last October 2004, Hoop! was named Best Secular Album at the prestigious Catholic Mass Media Awards (CMMA), together with a special citation given to Chit-Chit for her commendable and unique contribution to promoting Philippine indigenous cultures and music.

Asked if she had a hard time producing the CD, she responds with "At a fledgling producer and musical performer, it was motivation into being both a follower and a leader. It's one time, I had to find the right collaborators for the project, on a reasonable, but since not only the books but also the various temperaments of the inspired individuals to this production. One day after hand, as an artist, I had to yield to the common aspirations of indigenous music yearning to be heard, knowing that they generously shared their life songs with me. I was supposed to be faithful to the spirit of their utterances."

Taking you to bed

Charene C. Tang is the creative force behind Cronkite's and Living Bed store chains. Tang is an attempt to fusion economic and home furnishings. Her grandfather started selling home ware in their home in Sta. Cruz, Binondoc in the '50's.

She opened a new lifestyle store selling everything that you'd like to place to bed with are. Sleepcare concentrates the general concept of providing solutions to better sleep. To date, Tang's Sleep. envisions branches—one at the Podium in mega City and Shangrila Edsa in Mandaluyong.

And who can't get a good night's snooze with aromatherapy pillows that let you experience the awakening passion of jasmine, the uplifting scent of roses by your bedside and the calming waves of lavender?

For their core products, Tang uses their own brand—Sleepcare, "we source all over the world—we go there to factories, give our input and design so we can have a finished product that fits our customer's requirements in terms of price, aesthetics, design, and function, in terms of beddings—as in sheets, which are more of fabric mats, we provide big brands from the United States, little mat thing from the Malta, Hawaii and Holland. Therefore design and quality.

Banking on premium items rather than sticking with many end products that are easy to sell provide a marketing dimension for Tang and Sleepcare. Stained and worry customers do not flinch at spending for items that will guarantee them a restful night's slumber. "Our customers are those who buy bed. There's well-rounded and educated about deep bedding," continues Karen Sanchez, Sleepcare and Granite's retailers marketing person.

Customizing and personalized services is another breakneck Sleepcare specialty. "We use Selector to the first over purchase 15 minutes that numerous of options and computer analysis, to provide the right pillows for you, depending on your specific traits it measures the height of your neck from your back and the distance between the side of your head and your shoulder to determine the right pillow that will keep your spine straight and relaxed the whole time you are sleeping, whether you're on your back or on your side. Through this, we can solve neck problems and considerations the most convenient correct is maintained.

As the upper middle and affluent market settles a new equilibrium, they are constantly trying to re-connect with things that make the most in life—the comforts and warmth of home and the feel of the warm bodies that create meant in your life.

Singer

Reading page B2

spotted last Feb. 26, a wide selection of Singer sewing machines and an array of appliances is on display, including televisions, refrigerators, washing machines, and small kitchen appliances. Edith is pleased with the changes that this special occasion will bring to the business.

"Before, we just sold sewing machines, their parts and services. But now, we can offer all the other products of Singer, which are a lot more than sewing machines, actually. They have all these household appliances, and we're offering everything now. We're also offering easy installment plans now, so our market will be growing. The store will be carrying out the installment or a per-month basis from now on."

Ronnie Abes, assistant marketing manager of Singer, echoes her sentiments, as well. "This location is a prime area. There's a lot of potential here. We were approached by the owners of our dealers, and were looking at ten showrooms to materialize. But it the first one we built for a franchise dealer so we let the showroom located at the main office that the prime customers Singer appliances can fully try. We want to increase sales too, as well."

He is looking forward to more showrooms launched next century, which he hopes will bring the greatest company's goodness to more households. "Sure, like to serve the sewing machine fans, since this is our core product. We're also planning a lot of activities like free sewing lessons and free cooking demonstrations to promote our cooking ranges in our Sunday coffee shows."

Editor Chels Bataid-Fortuno

Sanctuary from the streets

Help Virlanie in realizing for street children a new life and a bright future

PRINCESS Caroline is shown with one of Virlanie's little kids on her VIP visit last year.

THE STREET urchins who dot the alleys and byways of the metropolis have found a new home in the Virlanie Foundation, which runs six centers for street children in Metro Manila and Batangas.

Unique among aid organizations dealing with street children, Virlanie not only provides shelter to children from four years old up, but also rehabilitates them through educational, social, sports, medical, psychological and other services. Its programs are comprehensive and exhaustive. It could be said that Virlanie is a harmony in salvation.

The man behind Virlanie is Frenchman Dominique Lemay. The former seminarian had worked for the Caritas (Catholic Charities) in France, particularly with problem youths involved in drug addiction and street crimes. He found the work frustrating because the young people were bitter, disrespectful and undisciplined. When his job took him to the Philippines in the 1980s, he had thought he would meet the same hostility and disrespect. But found instead children and youth eager to make him feel at home in their warm embrace and tender kindness.

Taken by the grace and hospitality of the young Filipinos and eager to work with street children, Lemay established Virlanie in 1991.

Virlanie's homes—12 in Metro Manila and a farm home in Batangas—are specialized homes catering to specific age brackets, gender, physical condition and physical circumstance. They have provided a sanctuary not only to young vagrants, but also to abandoned children, youth prostitutes, and victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

To date, Virlanie has ministered to 7,000 children. It has enjoyed wide acclaim here and abroad for its important work. The French government awarded Lemay the French Republic Human Rights Prize in 2001. One of the staunch donors of the foundation is the Aimee International, the humanitarian outfit of the late Princess Grace of Monaco. Last year, Princess Caroline, Grace's daughter, came to Manila to host a charity dinner for Virlanie.

With expanding programs to respond to the varied social welfare needs of young people, Virlanie is having difficulty coping with the hard times. The Inquirer Lifestyle staff paid a visit to the 12 homes of the foundation in Makati and Manila to determine the immediate needs of the children. The stories below should impress readers with the significant work of the different Virlanie homes and the impression that must be satisfied to continue with the operations. It is hoped that in the spirit of Lent, readers would support Virlanie in helping young people stymied by poverty and abuse to find the road back to a brighter future and a more fulfilling life.

Mother and Child Home

By Gibbs Cadiz

Top 5 needs:

- 10 queen bed sheets
- 10 queen pillows
- 10 queen bed mosquito nets
- 5 medicine cabinet
- 5 emergency lights/office tables

MOTHER and Child Home was set up by Virlanie Foundation to take care of homeless pregnant unwed mothers from 15 years old and below, and babies up to three years old.

The home, located in a rented three-story unit along Interior Avenue in La Paz, Makati City, currently has 14 wards—six mothers and eight toddlers—along with two house teachers, one house mom, one project coordinator and one social worker.

There are also two Danish volunteers who conduct classes for mothers on sewing, massage, cooking, cosmetology and bead making, as well as basic Math and English.

Because of limited space, Mother and Child's maximum capacity is 10 mothers. Pregnant women are taken care of for a minimum of six months, and after delivery the center works to reunify them with family or relatives. In most cases, women are either homeless, without relatives in Manila, victim of sexual abuse or were driven out by their families due to unwanted pregnancy.

The center provides them free food, medicines and check-up fees, and shoulders all delivery charges. Women can work on outside jobs in the early months of pregnancy while staying at Mother and Child. Those who are unemployed are referred to potential employers after delivery.

For donations and inquiries, call Joanna Monserate or Abigail Malate at tel. 8926756 or Virlanie Foundation at 8941209 or email virlanie@virlanie.org. Mother and Child Home is located at 42 Interior Avenue, La Paz Village, Makati City.

Ella Yallah Home

By Cinche V. Maral

"AE, ang gusto ko [teddy] bear!" giggles Cocoy (not his real name).

The 6-year-old is small for his age, but his quiet mien then makes up for what he lacks in size. When asked why he wants a teddy bear, he breaks into a shy grin and answers, "Para po may kausap ako sa gabi-gabi."

Cocoy is the home (emergency) of the 21 wards of Ella Yallah (EY) Home, one of the centers of Fabian Foundation Inc. EY aims to provide a loving home for children and victims of drug use, physical and sexual abuse, and in conflict with the law.

Many of these children, according to project coordinator Lucas Lumawig, have previously been living on the streets or abandoned by their parents, like Cocoy and his brother.

Most of the EY wards attend regular school, with four in high school as present. One girl, the oldest at 22, is third-year criminology at the Philippine School for the Blind. One of the boys is more as a result of a traumatic experience. One girl is set to be reunited with her mother soon.

At EY, lack of bedspaces is actually the least of Cocoy's problems. In fact, he and his 12-year-old brother share a crib since other boys the cramped third level of the leased new apartment unit housing EY.

On the second level, the 14 girls' sleeping quarters are divided into two small rooms, adjacent to the tiny EY office. The ground floor is living, dining and kitchen areas (it also, with one small room for the housemother and kitchen in one corner).

EY has just recently moved to this new location in Brgy. La Paz, Bitukel, and it's quite an improvement from its previous home—a dark, decrepit second level of a house leased nearby. However cramped, the positive effect of the new home on the children, according to Antonette, has indeed been unequivocal.

Top 5 needs:
- Clothes and underwear (to ages 3-11 years old, unisex/boys)
- Bunk beds and folding tables
- Wall fans
- Medicines
- Refrigerator

Per Michaele (her online moniker) on the good heart of sponsors, however, the P264,000 monthly rent is quite a stretch. In fact, the children had been sleeping on mattresses laid out on the floor since the transfer; the bunk beds in the previous location are too big for the new place. The dining table can seat only 12 children at a time; thus the older kids have to eat on the floor at mealtimes. Without chairs, they have had to update all their clothes and toys belongings in a corner of their room.

When asked what the other children wanted, Cocoy scours them in our they all want a base. A 14-year-old girl asked for a school bag, one boy a Walkman, still another a super smoothie.

Then Cocoy hastens to add, "Meron pa po ako gusto sa kin, hindi lang para sa ang akoma lang."

For inquiries and donations, call Lucas Lumawig at 86, Silver Miranda at 8907020, or Fabian Foundation at 8662280, e-mail erbano@ebrio.org. Ella Yallah is located at 238 Aurora Blvd., La Paz, Makati City.

Herrod Home

By Beverly C. Burgos

SIGE Vitanza Foundation Inc. put up Herrod Home for Children in 1992 and Herrod Home Para sa Bata in 1995, it has alleviated the plight of over 300 children who have been abused, abandoned and neglected and have a history of drug use.

Herrod Home for Children takes care of children aged 12-21 while Herrod Home Para sa Bata handles kids aged 6-16. As previously, Herrod Home for Children provides shelter to street boys and some girls while the latter has 18 boys and some girls.

Both homes provide developmental services such as residential, medical, social, psychological, psychiatric, educational, spiritual, sports and recreation. A family atmosphere is ensured in these homes with parents, surrogate aunts and uncles, project coordinators and social workers providing love, discipline and guidance.

Children's needs

The children's needs are great. "There are stories that would break your heart," says Ms. Peggy Catalan, project coordinator of Herrod Homes for Children for four years now. "They are brutal, but the stories, with faces that are in urgent need of mending."

Interestingly, children will repeat the abuse they receive. "The goal is to end that by giving them care, guidance and attention. We want them to be safe given, not abuse repeaters," says Jocelyn Pedro, social worker for Herrod Home Para sa Bata since November.

Herrod Home for Children and Herrod Home Para sa Bata currently seeks funding and support.

Herrod Home Para sa Bata also needs extra hands to care for and sew.

Top 5 needs:
- Herrod Home for Children
- 3 sacks of rice
- Double-deck beds
- Refrigerator
- Gas range for the kids' cooking and baking activities
- Herrod Home Para sa Bata
- CD and cassette players
- Badminton set
- Volleyball set
- Folding tables

For donations and inquiries, call Herrod Home for Children at 8972580 and Herrod Home Para sa Bata at 8922326, or 99 Sotto Boundaries at 8662280/ 8851260. Herrod Home for Children is located at 8 Sunrise Ave., La Paz, Makati. Herrod Home Para sa Bata is at 3021 Camp St., San Antonio, Makati.

E-mail the author at rburgos@inquirer.com.ph

Jade Home

Top 5 needs:
- 1 water dispenser
- 1 refrigerator
- 1 washer/wash set
- 1 washing machine
- 1 fan machine

By Allison W. Lopez

AT THE JADE Home, 17 special children will grow your mother with a supportive mama, a curious man, a healthy smile, and sometimes, even a little punch or smack on the arm.

Eye will hide behind the answer's walls, doors and tops all search in the brightest colors... just the way the children like it.

They like to be cartoonish and to color, solve, save spaces and whatever behind Catalina, and for a reason. It is a harsh reality that most of these kids were abandoned, left on their own to deal with their disability. Some parents who are unable to provide the care they need.

To accommodate the various needs of special children finding their way to Silang, the Jade Home was established in 1996.

They now have a home they can call their own...complete with four house parents, two teachers, a physical and occupational therapist, and the requisite social worker and project coordinator. Jade Home understandably has the largest staff yet around to the kids' specific needs.

But every day is not enough. With 17 diverse cases ranging from mental retardation, autism, cerebral palsy, and mental illness—and with some of them only in their 20s—the staff's hands are always full. "We can only take in wards. 17 is actually more than the maximum," says Catalina.

Jade Home project consultant Frank Andrin, who has been with Habitat since 1997, says another working machine would be very helpful in case the old one breaks down.

"Multiple day dishwasher basic as many more. Bah mga ipad na donor Aamod basa. Multi-up Corp maaaring pang washing machine dahil kahawig-in ng wall! Dito will handwork the clothes," he says.

Steve Sevenfriend, dedicated, diligent, and now undergraduate at Dr. 22 boys and five girls will also be appreciated.

Meanwhile, around P150,000 a month is spent for medication alone. These are usually for the seizure meds of the kids once they're found and cared for. Vitamins to keep them healthy. There are also the children's adult diapers (which cost P150-170 pieces) daily since they do not have the ability to use the toilet.

It isn't easy to care for special children. Catalina has seen psychosomatic disorders, yeast, which are very expensive, avoid greatly helps them in developing the right programs for each child, especially those who show no signs of progress. At present, nine diagnoses are based on observations by educators, family members and psychiatrists.

Jade Home also needs:
- 1 big drying pan
- 1 gas range
- 2 heavy duty/desk chairs
- 1 blender
- 1 big rice cooker
- 1 wheelchair
- 1 water heater
- 1 medicine cabinet
- 1 steel filing cabinet
- PT treatment bed
- 2 mop equipments
- 1 stand fan

For donations and inquiries, call Frank Andrin or Anthony Alcantara at 8972259, or visit Habitat Foundation at 8662280. Jade Home is located at 4000 Sigay St. corner Santa Fe., La Paz, Makati City.

Marco Polo Care Center

By Yungie Baga-Reyes

Top 5 needs:
- 1 pediatric wheelchair
- 1 bathtub
- 4 orthopedic wall bars
- 1 wooden work set
- 10 hammers

JAN Andrew's mother was a commercial sex worker. She would leave 13 months a day and usually every night, alone while she tried to find work in the street.

That fateful night when 13 was only nine months old, a fire broke out in a nearby slum, razing the entire block including JA's home. Miraculously, he survived but was badly burned on his face, chest, abdomen, left leg and feet.

His mother eventually left him and sent him for adoption. 13 was brought to Voltaire Foundation.

Now, at six years old, 13 is one of the 29 wards of Marco Polo Care Center. He's smart, giddy, friendly and absolutely oblivious to the tragedy that struck him at every tender age.

Marco Polo Care Center, run by the Voltaire Foundation, serves as home for abandoned, physically or mentally abused children aged 0 to 18. It provides shelter, food, clothing and education to these young wards.

According to Benedicta Brazil, a social worker and project coordinator of Marco Polo Care Center, the children are referred to Gerry's Grill by other agencies or walk-in clients are brought in for further assessment.

"We give a wide range of services from medication and medical treatment to psychological counseling," explains Brazil.

Like a real home, the center has a foster father and three house mothers to nurture and comfort these most vulnerable victims.

Last year, 13 underwent an operation to repair his damaged legs and face. Metal braces were placed on his young limbs. Because of this, 13 can't walk and now goes around with his fellow wards in an old-fashioned stroller.

Therefore, a pedia orthodontist would be a lot of help for 13. "It would make it easy for him to move around even by himself," says Brazil.

Marco Polo Care Center also needs:
- 1 bedpan
- 1 lifting cabinet
- 36 pairs of diapers
- detergent powder and bath soap
- Baby milk powder
- assorted kids chairs
- 1 drying pan
- 2 sinks/sofa

For inquiries and donations, call Benedicta Brazil or Marilyn Flores at 8960275, or Voltaire Foundation at 8662280, or email voltaire@info.com.ph. Marco Polo Care Center is at 4888 Sigay St. corner Santa Fe., La Paz, Makati.

E-mail the author at rbaga@inquirer.com.ph

Marco Polo Home

By Ruth L. Navarro

THE MARCO Polo Home or (MPH) House), 26., La Paz, Makati City, was established in February 1995 for abandoned, neglected and orphaned children.

It could provide for 20 children at any given time. Children ages 0, 12 years come from Mchanic Foundation's Drop-in Center and Marco Polo Care Center after they had been. These kids have undergone rehabilitation for six months, or as soon as their social need of further support and assistance.

Some of the children don't even have first names when they're brought to the center, so the social workers and volunteers responsible for them.

"We let the children 'borrow' our surnames," says social worker Maritess Pablo.

Besides giving them an identity, the home provides for the basic needs of the children and sends most of them to school. Constant psychological assessment is given to help the children overcome trauma to live.

experiences and behavioral problems like avoiding or substance abuse.

The home also provides legal assistance for the declaration of abandonment of children because foreigners or relatives can no longer be traced.

"We welcome the news that a child has been declared abandoned because this means we could see him or her qualify a loving family who can give all the love and guidance he or she needs," says Pablo.

Top 5 needs:
- 1 big mattress and small mattress
- 1 mortar (PG gal)
- 10 small-sized slippers
- 10 Tshirts for summer classes
- 10 underwear for single baby
- 10 blankets

For donations and inquiries, call Ahmar Bagay or Maritess Pablo at 8972607, or Voltaire Foundation at 8662280.

Elizabeth Home

By Pam Pasaol

SINCE 1995, girls who have been abused by members of their own family can learn the dangers of their own home and find protection at the Elizabeth Home. Those who have pursued the case against their perpetrators and are being threatened can also find a conservatory in Elizabeth Home.

These girls, some of whom also had experiences with drugs and prostitution, receive care during their stay.

Their residential and basic needs are met and they are also offered therapeutic and psychological services. If their court case is still underway, the people behind Elizabeth Home also assist them during their hearings.

Thanks to sponsors, the girls who live in Elizabeth Home also have educational opportunities, with a lot of them graduating high school and college. Those who don't go to college undergo skills training and receive jobs referrals.

Right now there are 16 girls under the care of Elizabeth Home, which can accommodate a total of 20 girls.

The age requirement used to be 15 and above, but because of the growing number of sexual abuse cases involving younger children, the center has lowered its age requirement.

The girls stay for an average of two years before returning to their families while others stay longer, until they are 22 years old. Right now, the youngest girl at Elizabeth Home is nine years old.

Project coordinator Jess Tanseco says that the home is in need of an oven and baking equipment. "We used to have baking lessons for the girls but since the oven broke down, we had to stop."

They also need milk for the younger girls, clothes, electric fans and a mini component. "When we have programs, we have to borrow from other homes."

They also borrow a VCD player so the girls can watch movies.

Top 5 needs:
- Oven and baking equipment
- Clothes
- Milk
- Electric fans
- Mini component and VCD player

Tanseco says that the girls would also appreciate kind-hearted people and multimedias who would be willing to take one like older girls for trips to the mall for movies and meals or fast food restaurants. "The activities to do ways on the younger ones movies, the older ones out, have to some making sugar cereal."

Maybe now, someone will.

For donations and inquiries, call Elizabeth Home at 8886513 or 0917-8911260 Kindergarten at 8952289. Elizabeth Home is located at 2332 Condor St., Bitukel Makati.

SUNDAY, MARCH 28, 2010

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Sunday LIFESTYLE

Like Easter Christ, Bacolor church rises from the grave

Text by Alex T. Vergara
Photos by Jim Sebastian Paraiso

MANY Filipinos associate Holy Week with the passion and death of Jesus Christ, but for a good number of others, it's also a time of hope and personal resurrection. Nowhere is this more evident than in the lahar-devastated town of Bacolor, Pampanga, which is expected to spring back to life in the coming days as the pageantry of the Filipino Catholic Lenten season reaches its full dramatic flowering.

Bacolor was totally obliterated from the map in the last decade. The provincial town seat had been deposited on the slopes of Mt. Pinatubo during the eruption of 1991, and washed down by rains the years following that, bringing with it death and destruction. In 1995, the historic town was completely buried. The crown and spire of its old cathedral-old church barely peeking through the debris and dust too.

But since then, the town and its proud church have slowly climbed up from the grave.

Now local and foreign tourists on their way to Aklan and other holiday destinations have included Bacolor's parish church in their itineraries during this Holy Thursday's visita iglesia, the traditional pilgrimage to churches in the Catholic calendar.

LIFE, 12

MASSIVE Ever-resilient is a raised altar that was moved to the church's rubble dome. The ceiling had to give to achieve an illusion of height.

A SPRUCE-UP else on the right side of the church is up for restoration in the background are antique mahogany "bow pews and lancha designer pews de proa.

Refusing to be written off, the Pampanga church has become a true shrine to the indomitable faith of a people

Fr. Nick Salda, parish priest of San Guillermo de Aquitania Church

THE CHURCH'S main altar, circa 1930s

ALTAR of repose in 2003

Like Easter Christ, Bacolor church rises from the grave

Continued from A-1

The Holy Week tradition has turned into a visual feast for the faithful, as some Catholic churches unwittingly strain each other to building an elaborate "altar of repose" spruced up with costumes, flowers, church vessels and candles. Some churches have even resorted to using bamboo poles, garden vases, fountains and even lawn-like lessons to frame the holy Eucharist.

No-man's land

"There was a time when people deliberately skipped our lawn during Holy Week since there was really nothing to see. After what some Bacolor became a strand no-man's land," said Jerome de Jesus, a Manila-based artist and furniture designer whose ancestors hail from Bacolor. "We don't intend to compete with other churches by coming up with something exotic or flashy. In fact, we want to recreate an altar of repose the way the people of Bacolor did in the 19th century."

Dr. Jesus and childhood friend Tom Jesus, a treasurer of church antiques and a native-son of Bacolor, have been in charge of doing the town's altar of repose since 2002. Most most of the church's valuables pieces have either been lost through the centuries or buried hastily recently for safekeeping. Some have had to borrow items from their respective collections or borrow from friends.

"We work with hired hands from Manila and a number of volunteers from the town," said de Jesus, who, like Jesus, donates his time and services to the church during Holy Week.

Fr. Nick Salda, the town's parish priest, has been quite cooperative to their ideas. The young priest has given the two friends a free hand to oversee the preparations as members of Bacolor's parish pastoral council. Jesus has also made it his priority to seek the help of restoration and upkeep of the church.

But the past's involvement dates back much earlier, with altar altar shrines wiped out Bacolor, turning people to rebuild their homes and churches or move elsewhere to escape lawlessness committed by the government.

"It was as if a part of us was ruled over night," said Jesus. "My father and I were among the lucky ones since some of us died."

Jesus says nostalgic to laugh at it now, but most of them back then were angry. Who did Bacolor hear the lessons of value? It was only later that they began to understand that their beloved town served as a catch basin to save other towns and cities.

Like Jesus, a number of residents later also returned to Bacolor to rebuild their disrupted lives. Not a few of its former inhabitants have also donated their time and money to help the town gain a semblance of its old self back. But it will take decades to undo what rupture did to the town in a matter of hours.

"Not only were our lives disrupted, so were our traditions," said Jesus. "Apart from helping deepen the faith, we hope that through such efforts as building an altar of repose we can also revive some of the town's dying traditions."

Reviving faith practices

One such practice among parishioners during Holy Week is to relive the passion of Christ by walking around Bacolor carrying crosses with **[illegible]** verses written in Latin, English and Kapampangan. As if walking under the searching summer sun to spread God's words isn't hard enough, they have to do it covered in black cloth from head to toe.

"People were so busy rebuilding their lives that for a time nobody had the time nor the energy to take up the practice," said Fr. Jesus. "Some children don't even know that such a tradition exists. The situation started to change soon after the church was partly restored."

Indeed, if there's one structure that has become a visual witness to the rise and fall of Bacolor's fortune through the centuries, it's the church, which was first built by Augustinian friars in 1576 in honor of San Guillermo de Aquitania, one of the town's patron saints (the other is Our Lady of La Naval). The church was again rebuilt in 1886 after an earthquake destroyed it in 1880.

When disaster of near-biblical proportions again struck Bacolor in 1991, the church again managed to stand, but barely.

Even before the last drop of lahar had solidified nation and outside the church, the people of Bacolor were already divided on how to best deal with the disaster's effects: one group wanted the world to be reminded of it, while a bigger group wanted to forget about it as much as possible and move on.

Restoration

"Much as we would like to forget about it, we can't," said Father Salda. "The destruction was simply too big for us to forget, but we can certainly do something to regain a part of ourselves back."

Thus, the church's restoration under Father Salda's predecessor began in earnest. Through solicitations from companies and private individuals, a team began to unearth the partly submerged main altar in 1998. Fortunately, the church staff had saved its massive altar, including that of San Guillermo de Aquitania, before it was completely engulfed by lahar.

Due to lack of funds, it took Jerome and his collaborators almost six years to finally restore the main altar to its original condition, including repainting it light blue as it appeared centuries ago. They added several conservation platforms and electrical connections behind the altar.

Because the church's floor was by almost 20 feet, the team also had to make a number of adjustments. The main altar, including a pair of smaller altars, for instance, was moved to a lofty area of the church where its icons is located.

The church's main doors are now but a memory to their place are smaller entrances that were once windows made of stained glass by the choir loft.

After the stained sandy floor gave way to a concrete one, the ceiling was next to go, exposing the church's beams and giving it a rustic, industrial look. It was possible a shame between exposing the ceiling and giving the church added height.

"Our job is not yet finished," said Father Salda, "but our major objective of restoring the main altar is already done. And by the grace of God, the people's faith have been strengthened as well as their resolve to carry on with their lives."

E-mail the author at ampeg@inquirer.com.ph

ARTIST'S rendition of San Guillermo de Aquitania's altar of repose this Holy Thursday

Special bank promo for call center workers

CALL CENTER professionals can win holiday trips and other enticing prizes by opening an account with East West Bank (EWB).

The Call Center Dive into Summer Promo, the latest East West Bank offering, is exclusive to employees of call centers.

To qualify, a call center officer or employee has to open a current or savings account at any participating branch.

Qualified depositors can win any of the following prizes: P300 Smart Buddy Sim Card Bonus, tickets for Ayala Cinemas, P300 Starbucks gift certificate, East West Bank backpacks and ball pens.

In the raffle promo, one winner gets a trip for two to Bohol inclusive of round trip air transfer and three days, two-nights hotel accommodation, and another a trip for two to Boracay inclusive of round trip air transfer and three days, two-nights hotel accommodation.

Minor prizes include P5,000 worth of Bauman's gift certificates.

A customer gets one entry for every P5,000 additional deposit. They can get one entry for every P1,000 in excess of the minimum.

East West Bank Call Center Dive into Summer Promo is available at Main Bank, Makati, Ortigas-Meralco, Pearl of Bank II, and Cebu A. Arnaiz East West Bank Personal Banking Center (PBCs).

Deadline for submission of raffle entries is May 15. Raffle draw is on May 20 at East West Bank's head office (McCann Towers, Ayala Ave., Makati City).

Call 9-ACCESS (9222377).

Passion play in Valenzuela

MICHAEL King Tirona of the Encarnacion Theater Ensemble (CET) Actors Company directs "Via Crucis," to be staged on March 31, 7:30 p.m., at the Our Lady of Fatima Church in Valenzuela City.

Another performance is scheduled for 7:30 p.m., March 24, at Manet Bakeneria.

"Crucis" is a two-hour epic drama based on the Filipino "Pasyong Genesis" and depicts the life of Jesus Christ from his baptism to his resurrection.

It stars Ace Otwin, Angel de la Cruz, Roland Cuenca and Ronald Ramirez.

Crucis is an annual activity of the Valenzuela Community Theaters Guild (2796296).

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Sunday LIFESTYLE

A scenic way to do the traditional 'Via Crucis'

Text by Tita R. Gloria
Photos by John Thaddeus L. Bautista

THIS is the best time for that scenic drive along the less-traveled lakeside route leading to Eastern Laguna.

The view around Laguna de Bay and of the rice farms at the foot of the Sierra Madre mountain is classic. Farms are green with young palay, here and there, idyllic scenes come alive with sweeping hawks and white egrets.

But a more irresistible force pulls one to this route, especially this Lenten season—the quaint old churches with centuries-old traditions of the Cross, altars, and religious images.

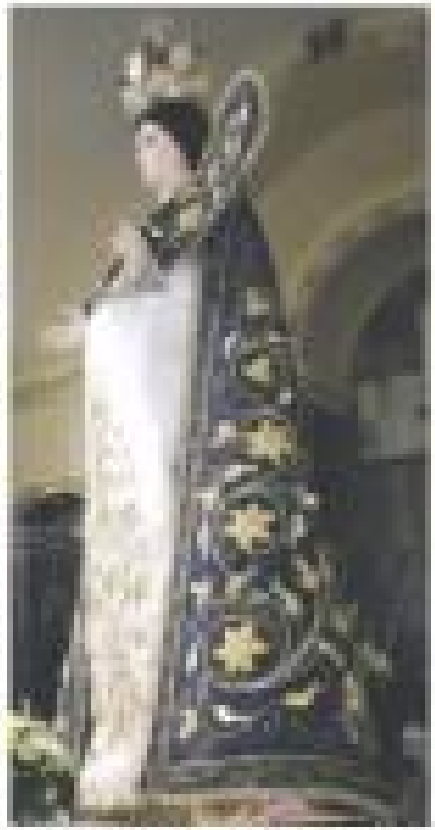
In several well-known Spanish-era churches, the old altar, icons and paintings are religiously revered by the local folks the same way their predecessors did hundreds of years ago. Old paintings of the Stations of the Cross draw throngs of via crucis devotees every Lenten season.

There are actually two main routes to Eastern Laguna—via the South Luzon Expressway and the Road on Laguna coast. A recent tour of Eastern Laguna churches were the third time it was an opportunity to see up close Laguna de Bay, one of the largest lakes in the world.

First stop was Mahilao town. From there the group visited Sta. Maria, Pakil, Kalibawasan, Pangil, Paete, Siniloan and Lumban.

An 'immigrant'

Enshrined in the church built by the friars



SANTACRUZ na Pangil, one of the oldest image's oldest town, is the poignant Virgin Mary the locals fondly call "Mahal na Birhen de la Cruz" supposedly a gift from Spain's Prince Carlos in the 16th century.

HOT food and drinks are longtime lighted Easter Vigil the Resurrection await weary travelers after crossing Eastern Laguna's mountains.

during the 16th century, the Virgin Mary of Concepcion has survived floods, fire and earthquakes. Originally from Playa Dilao in Paco, Manila, it was first brought to a chapel in Los Baños before given a permanent home in Mahilao.

The Nuestra Señora de Candelaria Church was built on top of a hill called mundal ng kalbaryo to protect it from floods. Devotees climb 120 concrete steps.

The church is a testimony to the community's devotion to the Virgin Mary. Historical accounts say when the church was devastated by earthquake, many devotees brought one block of stone every day until rehabilitation was completed. And when the church was burning during World War II, the townspeople formed a fire brigade, forming a long line to pass buckets of water from the river to the church.

Old bells

The out-of-the-way town of Santa Maria takes pride in its 400-year-old church dedicated to Nuestra Sra. de los Angeles. The church is noted for its old bells.

Nestled at the foot of a mountain, Sta. Maria is known for its beautiful agricultural harvest, which many locals ascribe to their devotion. Throughout the year, the rich land yields bananas, citrus, rambutan, papaya,

An irresistible force draws people to Eastern Laguna during the Lenten season—quaint old churches with centuries-old Stations of the Cross

A TYPICAL church plaque gives details of the old churches found in Eastern Laguna.

A scenic way to do the traditional 'Via Crucis'

THE TABLEYSINAL festival of Turumba is held at the San Pedro de Alcantara Church of Pakil. It is a tribute to the Virgin of Turumba, circa 1998.

JEWEL-STUDDED crowns and dothes are typical of religious images in Eastern Laguna churches. The precious stones were donated by devotees over the years.

ELABORATELY carved niches dot the main altar of the 200-year-old church of Pakil. Each niche has 14 icons.

and coverage.

Pregnant patroness

Pangil town's Our Lady of Nativity Church is one of the oldest churches in the Philippines and is known for a unique statue of a pregnant Virgin Mary, said to be a gift from King Carlos III of Spain.

Indeed, the town and the church are rich in cultural history. It is said that before he became a king, the then Prince Carlos lived for two years in a convent in Pangil. When he returned to Spain and was crowned King, he sent two images to Pangil—the Santo Niño de Cebú and a pregnant Virgin Mary known as Nuestra de Luz. The pregnant Our Lady of de Cebú became the patron saint of women who yearned to be pregnant.

Miraculous

Enshrined in the San Pedro de Alcantara Church, the oldest church of Pakil and built in 1788, is the famous Virgin of Turumba. Romanguyin believes the statue is miraculous and has documented many of the Virgin's powerful intercession.

The old Franciscan church is also known for its ornate architecture, with dominant Corinthian and Ionic styles. The antique altar has 14 icons in gilded niches, the towering statues of Archangel Michael, and the original paintings of Juan Dans, a famous painter of Pakil.

The church has a beautiful review of the life-sizes of the Cross made by local artists.

Apostle's church

Home of carved canvas and papier-mache statues of Laguna, there has a Spanish-era church dedicated to the apostle St. James. What is unique about this church are the baroque-style altar and many religious figures carved and painted by local artists of long ago.

Every year, awe-inspiring are the original murals of Juan Dans, who used natural color pigments mixed with volcanic ash and brushes made from cats' hair.

Exotic finale

Dinner and entertainment at the Exotic Garden Restaurant in Kalayaan is a fitting finale to the tour of Eastern Laguna's old churches. Owners Elmo Mitering and Boy Ermino serve a rich assortment of Laguna's local delicacies.

Located along the main highway, the restaurant is hard to miss. At night, it is ablaze with colorful lights. By day, it is a virtual garden show with every inch of space planted to ornamental plants and trees. Sitting on 3,300 sq m of hilly area, it can accommodate 1,200 persons, and has dining areas, pavilions for conferences, and cottages.

Call or visit Inire Condes, CEO of Nuevo Ideo, do Marketing Inc. at 893-7552/711 and 7502200

Holy Week getaway

THE coming Holy Week, March 21-27, Diamond Hotel offers its Holy Week getaway promotional room rates. Get one Superior room for two consecutive nights or two Superior rooms on the same night for P6,500 net. This rate is inclusive of buffet breakfast for two persons per room at the Palm Court Cafe. The second package makes one Superior room available for one night at only P3,200 net. This is inclusive of breakfast for two persons at the Palm Court Cafe. The rates are for Filipino local residents and expatriates with Alien Certificate of Residency.

Getaway package

Hotel Poseidon in Batangas City offers a Holy Week package designed for whole families. A family of two adults and two children under 10 years old will pay only P6,000+ for an overnight stay. An additional P1,200+ will be charged per extra adult and P1,000+ per extra child.

Hotel Poseidon's Holy Week Package includes overnight accommodation in a premium room with buffet breakfast, lunch and dinner. Executive chef Orsato Edillon Jr. has prepared a special Lenten menu with fresh seafood, pasta and newly harvested vegetables.

Hotel Poseidon is at Punta Village, Dalind Lobo, Batangas City. Call 0243717281 and 423 3888/723 3000. Visit www.poseidon.com.ph.

Visita Iglesia package

Recharge your body and soul with the Holiday Inn's Visita Iglesia Package (VIP). It offers accommodation and activities for only P7,200+. The package includes two nights accommodation in a Deluxe Room with buffet breakfast for two at the Highland Cafe Restaurant for two days; buffet lunch or dinner for two at the cafe for one day; 10-percent discount on additional buffet meals at the Highland; and Visita Iglesia activity on Maundy Thursday, March 24. Guests who want to extend their stay will add P2,700+ net for every succeeding night, inclusive of buffet breakfast for two.

Holy Land tour

A pilgrimage tour of the Holy Land is "in-cost," plus domestic and inflight airfare to Berlin, but fares are for May 23-June 5. The tour begins with a visit to Amman, Madaba, Mt. Nebo and Petra in Jordan, also in the itinerary are Yardenit, Sea of Galilee, Capernaum, Tagbha, Mt. of Beatitudes, Mt. Tabor, Cana, Nazareth, Cesarea, Jaffa, Emmaus, Mt. of Olives, Garden of Gethsemane, All Nations Church, Dominus Flevit, Mt. Zion, St. Peter's Church in Galilanea, Dormition Abbey, Old City, Pool of Bethesda, Holy Sepulchre Church, Bethlehem, Via Dolorosa, Wailing Wall, Ein Karem, among others. In Every Tagalog, a biblical expert, is the pilgrimage chaplain.

Call 8124938 or 8126833 or visit Windsor Tower, 163 Legaspi St., Legaspi Village, Makati City.

A stress-free Holy Week

While the rest of the teeming population suffer in the summer heat and monstrous traffic, spend some time at contemplation. Here is peace and restful quiet right here in the city with The Sale Hotel's Holy Week room package.

For P3,100 net on deluxe rooms, or P3,800 net on standard rooms, local guests can enjoy a leisure respite on single or double occupancy, with kids below 12 years old free of charge. The package includes complimentary Continental, Side-by-Side breakfast for two guests, complimentary daily newspaper and bottled water, free use of the outdoor swimming pool, and free guarded parking space. Extra bed rate is P500 net, plus extra breakfast charges.

The Sale Hotel is on Matalino Road, Diliman Quezon City. Call 9245000 to 75, local 1462 to 1466.

Week-long Via Crucis in San Pablo

San Pablo City will hold its first ever week-long Via Crucis at the Sampaloc Lake from March 19-26, there will be pabasa and senakulo. Good Friday features, the Procession at Plaza Cuenca, and The Seven Last Words, a reggae play by the late performer Ian Monteza Inc.

At 4 a.m., Easter Sunday, March 27, at the Subukbong.

The project was conceived by Arthur T. Reyes, president and CEO of ATR Torres Wines International, and supported by Executive Members of the Imperial Villa Estates.

Lenten promo

Seven Suites in Antipolo City offers the Lenten Room Promo on March 21-27. The Mythical Suites will be available for P3,000+, the Romanesque Suites for P3,300+ and the Star Suites for P3,200+, inclusive of breakfast and dinner for two.

THE PROCESSION of Nias Cuenca, the main event on Good Friday of San Pablo City's week-long Via Crucis, will feature this image of Christ before Pilate.

Seven Suites Hotel Observatory is at Bonifacio Highway, Antipolo City. Call 6779401 to 02/ 2405893/ 9366885.

HIGHLIGHT A bamboo pole hold arrangements of anahaw leaves, orchids, anthuriums, calla lilies and blooming Lady. Cuna says calla lilies is a suitable substitute for the pricey orchid.

ONE TYPE Inside with a bunch of leaves may not look much but several of them in a row is striking.

SIMPLE white asters in lavender glass vases with gracefully bent curtain strips for accent were chosen for the cathedral's already-ornate Altar of Repose.

Flowers for Lent

Stylist Rachy Cuna lectures on floral arrangements for church rituals during Holy Week

Text by Linda O. Bolido
Photos by Rudy Espinas

ON A RECENT Monday afternoon, the hallowed hall of the magnificent cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, seat of the archdiocese of Manila, reverberated with the words "flowers" and "foliage," "vases" and "floral foam" and "glue."

Almost 300 people crammed into the front pews of the main altar, some sitting on the floor, many taking notes, listening with deep concentration to stylist Rachy Cuna.

Though it was already well into the Lenten season, the crowd was not listening to the gospel according to Cuna, at least not to biblical scriptures. But the event was very much part of the archdiocese's preparation for Holy Week.

Cuna was doing one of the things he does best—lecturing on and demonstrating floral arrangements to an audience consisting mainly of workers of the archdiocese's churches and parishes outside Metro Manila, as well as people who simply wanted to learn from a master.

The lecture on "Floral Offerings for the Liturgy: Holy Thursday Altars of Repose," the first to be held at the Manila Cathedral, was organized by Fr. Gabriel Casal, chair of the Manila Archdiocesan Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church (MACC) and director of the Archdiocesan Archives and Museum, in collaboration with Mags Nuestro Cebu, owner of the church and clinical of the Archdiocesan Office for Research and Development.

The main object of the exercise was to teach the workers to prepare their respective churches for the tradition, at church starting from Maundy Thursday to that most glorious of Catholic celebrations, the resurrection of the risen Lord Christ on Easter Sunday.

EASTER Sunday arrangement may be a combination of flowers and produce. Beside the image of the Immaculate Conception are bamboo poles with white lilium and in front of the table where the priest says Mass are fresh vegetables.

Repository

Special attention was given to the Altar of Repose. Fr. Casal explained that the Altar of Repose was built not on the usual repository in churches that have it, the altar holds the Blessed Sacrament, symbol of His Eucharist.

"Maundy Thursday celebrates the institution of the Eucharist... The liturgy on that evening, [Thursday], ends with a procession with the Blessed Sacrament ending at the altar of Repose, where it is kept, reserved, until the liturgy of Good Friday. The Altar of Repose is decorated as sumptuously as possible to honor and in celebration of the Blessed Sacrament... Our local practice of Visita Iglesia gives Catholics the opportunity to visit and pay homage to the Blessed Sacrament at the Altar of Repose at different churches," Fr. Casal said.

In his lecture/demonstration, Cuna, who is a MACC commissioner, showed church workers how they could use readily available local materials like bamboo poles, nipa-top and even empty bottles of wine used in church service for their floral arrangements.

Through he used lilium, Dancing Lady orchids and white roses, Cuna assured his audience that an attractive flower arrangement did not have to be expensive. "Hindi mahal ang regreglo," he stressed as he demonstrated how even simple flowers could be used.

With the participation of some members of the audience, he also showed that even vegetables could be appropriate church offering, especially on Easter.

Good substitutions

Cuna emphasized the need to substitute, improvise and just be creative. He said calachuchi and bougainvilla, run very colorful blooms, could be substituted for some of his arrangements.

A spray of silver paint on the wine bottles and yellow floral paint on ordinary lilucia daisies, as well as strips of cut-out and anahaw leaves cut to an unusual way, could give arrangements a dash of style and class.

Cuna's lecture, which drew the biggest participation, was just the last in a series organized by Fr. Casal to enhance the skills of workers in the archdiocese's 85 churches in Manila and Makati.

Previous seminars included boning up Parish Libraries, Basic Canonicals and Sacramentals, Introduction to Writing Parish Histories and Setting up an Ecclesiastical Museum.

The priest said they decided to include the lecture on flower arrangement "to emphasize that flowers, plants, fruits... are most beautiful of the Lord's creations—can be used in fitting components of our offerings in liturgical celebrations."

SWAYING of swampy, floral spray glass, white rose petals and cattelia leaves make this unusual flower arrangement possible.

STYLIST Rachy Cuna with Fr. Gabriel Casal, who organized the lecture

HOST Msgr. Nestor Cortez, rector of the cathedral

SUNDAY CROSSWORD

PREMIER CROSSWORD By Frank A. Longo

APPOMATTOX ADDRESS

answer on page D3

ADVERTISING Hondo Henry Perodeza and Ongie Tiongui

COUPLE in public: Mayor Jessie Castillo and wife Mayor Bet

GIORGANO owners Zita and Larry Lim

ELEGIBLE bachelors Christian Tap and Jericho Fernando

BAGUIO Mayor Braulio Yaranon and Jun Lagman

LOVELY daughter and mom, Jean and Beth Fernando

Baguio balls and fiesta frolic

THE BEAUTY about living in a country with so many islands is our cultural diversity. The fiesta best exemplifies this variety. Throughout the year, different towns celebrate their particular patron saints and religious figures, or sometimes the focus is on staple fruits or the livelihood of the people. These celebrations show off our fine music all of us Filipinos share—we know how to party!

The more famous fiestas, like the Ati-atihan in Kalibo and the Sinulog in Cebu, draw crowds of local and foreign tourists each year. Hoping to draw them, visitors are treated to nonstop food fests, concerts, parades and street parties.

Even the smaller festivals, like the recently concluded Strawberry Festival in La Trinidad, Benguet, and the Pinatubo de Fino Festival in Pinili City, Ilocos, are just as equally enthusiastic, with as much enthusiasm.

For Baguio, the yearly Summer Capital of the Philippines, the sunflower has become the symbol of the annual Flower Festival or the Panagbenga, which started a decade ago. Taking a break to revel in the cool climate and unique culture of the city, the local residents parade their floats of flowers, then cuddle-lined costumes reminding lessons of the highland region and dance in their ethnic tribe outfits.

I find that Baguio has the hottest men—capable of parading with their half-exposed washboard abs and with their family jewels expertly, newly kept from view with just the fine lace of woven tapestry on their g-strings.

Early this month, Baguio City was put back into the list of summer destinations after the City of Pines got a clean bill of health as the last bits of the "measles" were disappeared.

TESSA! Tessa Prieto-Valdes

I was in the Pine City for the opening of the new, Mediterranean-inspired Hotel Elizabeth, and I had a blast

HOTEL Elizabeth in Baguio City

KBP Maurice Burnagan

JUDGES Jonar Fernando, performing artist Gisela Sandoval and Dr. Jose Cuerpo

GROWING family: Joel, Ana and Julia Fernando

KINGLET Mining CEO Philip Fernandez, Councilor Fondi Garcia, hotel owner Joi Fernando

New boutique hotel

Pitch everything turning sunflower bright for Baguio, I headed up there for the opening of Hotel Elizabeth, a new Mediterranean-style, boutique hotel with the amenities and personalized service of a hole-in-the-wall hotel.

Well now the home stretch of my program, traveling by car was my only option of transportation, since airlines won't take me and we no longer have an Orient Express-style train to take me all the way to the Mountain Province.

However, the trip was not too grueling, since the completion of the ten-lane, ultra-smooth North Expressway route for travel time by six hour.

Finally, we have roads that are not 14 cm. similar to the Autobahn in Germany (unfortunately not various still has too many pothole-ruining vehicles). I was told that the NLEX has a professional road-viewing system, is highly computerized, has camera monitoring and is cheaper than the SLEX by 40 percent per km.

Like they say, time is golden so any amount saved from traffic and road woes is worth the toll fee.

After countless "Are we there yet?" statements from my daughter Jamika who took the trip with me, we reached the foot of the Kennon zigzag road at dusk. Of course, I had to show her the main attraction of the winding road: the stone lion's head that is my favorite snow spot to a person, gold mate. Wow. It's even looking now!

And I shouldn't be so bad. Although the lion has lost some of its magnificence as it guards the entrance to the city, perhaps this is only my pro-Boracay thinking since my husband is a Bonifacio and not a Lim.

The refreshing scent of pine trees welcomed me as we headed straight to the hotel, which is on Gibraltar Road passing Wright Park. I spent most of my childhood summers in Baguio, and Wright Park was where I began my love for riding horses—all those years climbing the horses there were full-grown stallions.

LOBBY mural by Alfred Salmo

DOLFERS at the Baguio Country Club

HOTEL guests Tina Sia, Zita Lim, Alice Garcia, Nora Cornet and Cora Magtibay

Weekend celebration

The grand opening of Hotel Elizabeth, owned by Joi and Bob Fernando, was a whole-weekend affair, with events including a golf tournament at the Baguio Country Club, an art exhibit and a mini concert featuring very talented Giselle Sandoval.

Amid all the festivities, I was just happy to go to the tiendesitas (flea market) and buy its ternerito, which seems so cheap!

At the golf tournament, ex-American native from Indianapolis, Mac McDaniel, got a hole-in-one! Both told me that classic friends of hers who flew in just for the opening would surely be back to play golf and enjoy Baguio's fresh cool and other tourist destinations as well. Every tourist counts!

The Fernando family has been in the hotel business for years: they have a six-hotel chain in Metro Manila called Hotel Fernadi. The noticeable thing about them is that they have kept their investments in the country and are helping our economy in their own way by creating jobs.

They also are very generous. Proceeds of the art exhibit sale and 20 percent of the income generated during the opening were donated to a charitable cause in Baguio.

Instead of the traditional ribbon-cutting, the guests of honor did a salad-tossing affair with strawberry dressing in a giant, wooden salad bowl. After the ceremony, relatives and friends of the Fernandos joined them in the salad-tossing activity.

TOURISM director Pura Ma Luisa Jacinto-Set husband Rocky and mural artist Paul Quinto

FRIENDS from Indianapolis Joyce and Mac McDaniel, and John Schmitt

FAMILY photo of Hotel Elizabeth owners

CAKULA, a mixture of Flora Cafe with Mediterranean flavors

Colorful sites

Indeed, Baguio is happy to be in the news, not because of the health issue but because of the Flower Festival and the Philippine Military Academy graduation ceremony.

The week I was there, four of the twelve female graduating cadets of the Philippine Military Academy landed on the top of their class, the highest number in eleven years since the PMA began accepting women. Go girls! You make me proud to be a Filipina!

If Baguio is to your short list of summer destinations, do stay at Hotel Elizabeth (email: reservations@hotelelizabeth.com.ph) with its charming interiors filled with Mediterranean frames and murals by artist Alfred Salmo.

I helped with the interiors, so one can expect the unusual—no traditional, big cabin designs here.

I was truly amazed with the number of firsts we have here in the Philippines. When I checked out the colorful website of WOW Philippines, I was so glad to view the stories presenting the different celebrations. We are truly a nation of happy and contented people. It is all a matter of perspective. Looking forward and having a positive outlook are the best ways to live.

Email me at sugarnieto@inquirer.com.ph.